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# THE WHITE SAHIBS IN INDIA





# THE WHITE SAHIBS IN INDIA

By  
REGINALD REYNOLDS

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE • .

IMPARTIALITY is the virtue of a knave or a fool's wisdom. I desire neither.

The maker of munitions will give you the objective facts regarding his traffic. The brewer will speak of his trade without bias. The sun-dried satrap from Peshawar will tell you the unvarnished facts about India. But an honest man will give you his opinion.

Those who dislike my conclusions may dispute them. But whoever would quarrel with my facts must enter the lists with my authorities.

I owe thanks to many, but especially to Miss A. G. Stock, and to Mr. Jasper Ridley, who was responsible for the index. The dedication is to all who have suffered in Indian jails for the crime of patriotism.



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## FOREWORD

Some accident, or the play of circumstances which often seems to us as the working of an unknown fate, brought Reginald Reynolds to India at a peculiar point in our recent history. He came on the eve of a great eruption, of human earthquakes which shook the hundreds of millions of India as well as that Empire which still holds sway here. He even played a little part in the tense drama which followed the Lahore Congress of December 1929 and preceded Gandhiji's famous march to the salt sea and civil disobedience. What happened to him immediately after that I did not know, for suddenly we were all caught up in the whirlwind of a mass upheaval and of a powerful and entrenched Government trying to suppress it.

But Reynolds saw something of this drama and of this great conflict between elemental forces, far greater than the individuals concerned in it. And that gave him an insight into the soul of India which was so passionately struggling for freedom, into the appalling poverty and misery of the Indian people which lay behind this elemental urge, and into the social conflicts which were becoming more and more evident and were colouring the nationalist and racial aspects of our struggle. He saw this struggle, as it should be seen, in the wider picture of the world struggle.

I am glad therefore that he has written this book. From one such as he a book on India claims attention. It is immaterial whether one agrees with him or not in everything he says. But what he says has knowledge behind it and insight and an appreciation of the wider issues. And so all of us, in India or England, can profit by his analysis of our problems and think with greater clarity about them.

There are two kinds of books on India written by Englishmen. The great majority of them are of the



imperial and patronising variety which point out to us the high destiny of the British Empire and our folly in not appreciating this patent fact. They are generous with their advice to us as to how we can fit in with this grandiose scheme of things. The other variety of books, very few in number, are written by Englishmen who are attracted towards our freedom struggle but are apt to consider it on sentimental grounds. Because their approach is more friendly, sometimes they show a greater insight, but their treatment is not very helpful in understanding the problems that confront us.

If we are going to solve these problems, we must understand them. We have to unravel the knots that have tied us up, and in order to do so our approach must be scientific and must take into consideration the needs of the masses in India. That is the problem of India, not the princes or the landlords or other vested interests, English or Indian. Imperialism has accentuated, and often produced, these knots, so the imperialist approach is out of the question. The sentimental approach common enough amongst my own countrymen, though inevitable under the circumstances, does not carry us far.

Every book that helps us to understand scientifically the background of the Indian struggle is to be welcomed. And so I welcome this book and commend it to Englishmen and Indians who want to help in the solution of one of the major problems of our age.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

*Allahabad,*

*February 25, 1937.*

## THE PRAYER OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S SERVANTS

*O Almighty and most Merciful God, who art the Sovereign Protector of all that Trust in Thee, and the Author of all Spiritual and Temporal Blessings, we thy unworthy Creatures do most humbly implore thy goodness for a plentiful Effusion of thy Grace upon our Employers, thy Servants, the Right Honourable EAST INDIA Company of ENGLAND. Prosper them in all their publick Undertakings, and make them famous and successful in all their Governments, Colonies, and Commerce both by Sea and Land; so that they may prove a publick Blessing by the increase of Honour, Wealth and Power to our Native Country, as well as to themselves. Continue their Favours towards us, and inspire their Generals, Presidents, Agents and Councils in these remote parts of the World, and all others that are entrusted with any Authority under them, with Piety towards Thee our God, and with Wisdom, Fidelity and Circumspection in their several Stations; That we may all discharge our respective Duties faithfully, and live Virtuously, in due Obedience to our superiors, and in Love, Peace and Charity one towards another: That these INDIAN Nations among whom we dwell, seeing our sober and righteous Conversation, may be induced to have a just esteem for our most holy Profession of the Gospel of our Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be Honour, Praise and Glory, now and for ever. AMEN.*

[This prayer, used by the Company's servants, is given as quoted by the Rev. John Ovington, sometime chaplain to the Company's factory at Surat, in his book *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689*. (Published in London, 1696.) Three such prayers were in 1698 "approved by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Bishop of London."]



# THE WHITE SAHIBS IN INDIA.

## CHAPTER I

### "JOHN COMPANY" COMES TO INDIA

THE East India Company was formed in the year 1600, during the most eventful period of World history. In Europe a rising middle-class was engaged in the overthrow of feudalism. The discovery of a New World beyond the Atlantic had opened unknown possibilities of plunder to European adventurers, whose rivalries drew nations into mortal combat. Nor did the daring and inventiveness of the age leave unassailed the strongholds of the Church. The seeds were already sown from which the Thirty Years' War was to devastate Germany in the early seventeenth century; while in Britain and the Netherlands Protestantism had sharpened the national conflict with the power of Catholic Spain.

Side by side with the conquest of a New World and the emergence of a New Europe a deadly struggle was still in progress between Christendom and the Moslem peoples. While the Saracen had been driven from Granada by the victorious arms of Castille and Aragon, a very different fate had overtaken the Christian outposts in the East. Here the last lingering citadel of the Roman Empire had fallen to the Ottoman Turks who had captured Constantinople, where for centuries the Byzantine Emperors had held the Mohammedan world at bay. Over South-east Europe the Ottoman armies advanced, subduing the Balkan countries and Hungary. Southward and eastward their empire spread over Syria, Arabia and Egypt.

It is indeed strange that the East India Company, which was destined to carry European domination to India and found the most powerful of all the White Empires in Asia,

should have been formed at such a time. Eighty years after its formation the Turk was still advancing upon the inmost strongholds of Christian Europe, and was only checked at the very gates of Vienna in 1683. The conflict of the Cross and the Crescent was actually at its most critical phase; and when the power of the Mughals reached its zenith in India, under the reign of Akbar, it was the fate of Europe rather than Asia that appeared to hang in the balance.

The fear of conquest or absorption by Mohammedan civilisation, even after the battle of Lepanto had dispersed the sea-power of Islam in the Mediterranean, comes out sharply in the extent of the persecution that was directed against the Moors in Spain. In this country for 700 years a brilliant Arab culture had flourished throughout the dark centuries of the Middle Ages. To the University of Cordoba, "the ornament of the world," had journeyed students from the most distant lands; and while Christian kings could not sign their own names this Arab State had provided free elementary schools for the poor. Such were the institutions which Church and State combined to destroy when the Moorish power came to its end; so that within a few generations hardly anything remained of the Arab civilisation apart from the relics of its magnificent architecture.<sup>1</sup> The Moors were compelled to abandon their costume, their language, their customs and even their names. The public baths which they had built all over the country were pulled down and they were even forbidden "to wash or bathe themselves either at home or elsewhere."<sup>2</sup>

A persecution so complete, extending beyond religious beliefs to the most minute cultural details, can only be explained by a very real terror of a still virile civilisation. Meanwhile in Eastern Europe Suleiman the Magnificent and his Ottoman successors were still conquering and building. From Constantinople to the furthest shores of India the crescent of Islam was supreme. New mosques arose among the fallen splendours of Byzantium; and the most powerful monarch of Europe, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, ruler of Spain, Naples, Sicily and the Netherlands had even paid tribute to the Turkish Soldan.

It was at this time—when Charles V was Holy Roman Emperor and the armies of Suleiman had occupied the whole of South-eastern Europe—that the Mughals had invaded India from the north and Babar had established his dynasty at Delhi. This descendant of the conqueror Tamurlane came to conquer and to rule where his famous ancestor had only looted and laid waste. Upon the plains of Panipat the Mughal defeated the Afghan Soldan who then ruled in Delhi and founded the last Oriental Empire that was to fall eventually to adventurers from furthest Europe. Under the Mughals this Empire rose to a level of civilisation which had no contemporary equal except in China, where peace and prosperity were maintained under the Ming dynasty.

The famous Company whose name was to become a by-word in history was not the first or the only commercial venture by which European merchants endeavoured to enrich themselves from the fabled treasures of Hindustan. Sir Francis Drake, on one of his expeditions to harass the preparations of the Invincible Armada, had met a Portuguese carrack, laden with Indian goods, and following the piratical tradition of which he was no mean example, had possessed himself of her rich spoils. A similar prize was made by an expedition fitted out for the West Indies by Sir Walter Raleigh, which encountered such another carrack near the Azores and carried her to Dartmouth. "This," writes James Mill, "was the largest vessel which had ever been seen in England, laden with spices, calicoes, silks, gold, pearls, drugs, porcelain, ebony, etc., and stimulated the impatience of the English to be engaged in so opulent a commerce."<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly in 1589 "divers merchants" made application to the Lords of Council for permission to send three ships and as many pinnaces to India. They enumerated the places at which the Portuguese had already made settlements and might claim exclusive trading rights, but mentioned other places as open to their enterprise.

The fate of this application is unknown, but two years later an expedition was fitted out under the command of a certain Captain Raymond for the purpose of plundering

the Portuguese. It met with disaster; and during the period of discouragement which appears to have followed, the Dutch (in 1595) sent four ships to India for purposes of trade.

"This exploit," writes Mill, "added fuel at once to the jealousy and to the ambition of the English." An association was formed in 1599, which, after considerable delays occasioned by diplomatic considerations, received its charter the following year. The charter was typical of those issued to similar merchant ventures and constituted the East India Company by the name of "The Governor and Company of the Merchants of London, trading to the East Indies."

The spirit and temper of the middle-class merchants who formed the Company is well illustrated by their attitude when negotiating with the Government for their charter. For reasons which can only be conjectured, the Government, whilst the matter was still under consideration, made application to the merchants' committee for the employment of Sir Edward Michelbourne in their expedition. The Committee's reply, which James Mill found among the "Minutes of a General Court of Adventurers" in the files of the Indian Register Office, states plainly their objection to the Government's proposal. They were resolved "not to employ any *gentlemen* in any place of charge" and requested that they might "be allowed to sort their business with men of their own qualitye, lest suspision of employ<sup>m</sup> of *gentlemen* being taken hold uppon by the generalitie, do dryve a great number of the adventurers to withdraw their contributions."<sup>4</sup>

Armed at last with their Charter,<sup>5</sup> the Merchants in 1601 sent their first fleet to the Indies. Sailing from Torbay, the Company's ships reached the island of Sumatra and sailed thence to Java, capturing on their way a Portuguese vessel, laden with calicoes and spices. It is not difficult to understand the "handsome profit" reaped by the owners from this voyage.<sup>6</sup> Further expeditions followed to the islands of the Indian Ocean, but the possibility of trading in Indian cloths and calicoes soon drew the English adventurers to India itself. Permission was obtained to establish "factories" (or trading posts) at Ahmedabad and

three other places, the "firman" of the Mughal Emperor confirming these privileges being received in 1613.

The history of the Company as a force in Indian politics now began in earnest. To the Mughal Court went Sir Thomas Roe in the character of the Royal Ambassador of England. He advised, however, against the continuance of the embassy. "A meaner agent," he counselled the Company, "would, among these proud Moors better affect your business. . . . Half my charge shall corrupt all this court to be your slaves."<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, he did his best to bring Dutch competitors into disrepute. "The Dutch," he wrote, "are arrived at Surat from the Red Sea, with some money and Southern commodities. I have done my best to disgrace them, but could not turn them out without further danger."<sup>8</sup>

The great sub-continent of India, which was from then onward to fall slowly and piece-meal into the hands of the Company, is described by James Mill as "at that time the seat of one of the most extensive and splendid monarchies on the surface of the globe."<sup>9</sup> Akbar, the grandson of Babar, founder of the Mughal Empire, ruled from 1542 to 1605 over the greater part of India and maintained complete religious toleration. Already the Mughals, like previous invaders of the country, were in the process of becoming Indianised: they had ceased to regard themselves as strangers, and had no home but India. Cultural forces had also been at work for years to blend the rival traditions of race and religion into what was slowly becoming a synthesis of Indian character.<sup>10</sup>

This synthesis had been openly urged by the finer spirits of the preceding century. From the time of the Hindu teacher Ramanand and his Moslem disciple Kabir the conception of a cultural unity had taken root in the country, and to this day Kabir is honoured both by Hindus and Mohammedans. In language the same tendency was evident; for just as modern English evolved from Anglo-Saxon and Norman French, so a new language had grown up in the Northern plains of India. This was the Urdu language, a composite of Hindi with words of Persian origin introduced by the Moslems.<sup>11</sup>



Akbar was a great statesman who knew the value of a united country. Deliberately he had fostered this synthetic process, appointing Hindus as his ministers and generals, encouraging mixed marriages and abolishing discriminatory laws. Badauni, a contemporary historian and an orthodox Moslem, who did not approve of the Emperor, wrote of him as follows:—<sup>12</sup>

“His Majesty collected the opinions of everyone, especially of such as were not Moslems. . . . His Majesty has passed through the most various phases, and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs, and has collected everything which people can find in books, with a talent of selection peculiar to him, and a spirit of inquiry opposed to every (Islamic) principle. Thus a faith based on some elementary principles traced itself on the mirror of his heart, and as a result of all the influences brought to bear on His Majesty, there grew, gradually as the outline on a stone, the conviction in his heart that there were sensible men in all religions, and abstemious thinkers, and men endowed with miraculous powers, among all nations. If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion?”

The Jesuit fathers who visited Akbar's court saw in him “the common fault of the atheist, who refuses to make reason subservient to faith.” Yet this illiterate doubter was the greatest political strategist of his age and the nearest approach to that non-existent ideal, a benevolent despot. By his orders many vital reforms were initiated, including the prohibition of compulsory *Sati*<sup>13</sup> (the self-immolation of Hindu widows) and of the enslavement of prisoners captured in war.<sup>14</sup> Jawarharlal Nehru, in his *Glimpses of World History*, quotes the highest tribute paid to Akbar's statesmanship by those very Portuguese missionaries who had denounced his “atheism”:

“He was a prince,” they said, “beloved of all, firm with the great, kind to those of low estate and just to all men . . . so that every man believed the King was on his side.”<sup>15</sup>

Not only, however, was there internal peace within the Mughal dominions and a growing cultural harmony, but under Akbar the country had become prosperous and the taxation of the peasantry had decreased. Of the village republics more will be said later, but it must not be forgotten that the real India of the seventeenth century was (as it still is) village India. While the villages remained self-governing entities in respect of justice, education, and the administration of their internal affairs, the despotism of changing dynasties affected the mass of the people in little but the extent of their annual taxation. War was as yet a matter of relatively small professional armies engaged in conflicts which hardly affected the even rhythm of the village economy. And while England displayed the shadow of democracy beneath the growing authority of a Parliament of landlords, the Indian village enjoyed the reality of a local autonomy which suffered little interference from the despotism of her kings.

"Happy is the nation which has no history," runs the old adage, and it is perhaps significant that James Mill, searching in vain for material, should have written of the Hindus: "This people, indeed, are perfectly destitute of historical records." <sup>16</sup> History, however, had spread its net over the vast sub-continent with the coming of the Mohammedan conquerors; and from now onwards the even balance of its village life was to feel increasingly the impact of an outside world. Yet over 200 years later a great British administrator, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who afterwards became Acting Governor-General of India, wrote as follows concerning the last surviving Village Communities, which yet remained in 1830 in Northern India:

"The Village Communities are little Republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are masters in turn; but the Village Communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves; a hostile army passes through the country;

the Village Community collect their cattle within their walls, and let the enemy pass unprovoked. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance, but when the storm has passed over they return and resume their occupation. If a country remain for a series of years the scene of continual pillage and massacre, so that the villages cannot be inhabited, the villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass away, but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the places of their fathers, the same site for the village, the same position for the houses, the same lands, will be reoccupied by the descendants of those who were driven out when the village was depopulated; and it is not a trifling matter that will drive them out, for they will often maintain their post through times of disturbance and convulsion, and acquire strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success.

"The union of the Village Communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India through all revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and it is in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence. I wish, therefore, that the Village Constitutions may never be disturbed, and I dread everything that has a tendency to break them up."<sup>17</sup>

Similar quotations will be given later to show that this system was by no means confined to any one part of the country, but was practically universal.

A final point to be noted at the opening of this new era of Indian history is the question of over-seas commerce. As far back as 200 B.C. the ports of Arabia and Ceylon had been in the hands of the traders of Gujerat, and in the fourth century A.D. they had penetrated Persia and East Africa, whilst large Hindu ships had visited the North Coast of Socotra. The Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian has recorded in his journal how in the early years of the fifth century he sailed

"from the mouth of the Ganges to Ceylon, from Ceylon to Java and from Java to China in ships manned by Indian crews."

In the fourteenth century Friar Oderic had crossed the Indian Ocean in a ship that carried seven hundred people and was manned by Rajput sailors.<sup>18</sup> Ship-building remained an important industry right up to the end of the eighteenth century, when the Governor-General (Lord Wellesley) wrote in a report of the year 1800:

"The port of Calcutta contains about 10,000 tons of shipping, built in India of a description calculated for the conveyance of cargo to England."<sup>19</sup>

But the ships of which Lord Wellesley wrote, though built of Indian timber by Indian workmen, were by that time the property of British merchants. The sea-trade was actually the first source of wealth to pass from Indian hands into those of Western adventurers.

In 1688 we read of Indian ships being seized by the Company's factors at Bombay; an act of aggression for which the Company was compelled to pay compensation when Aurungzib blockaded Bombay and captured the factory at Surat.<sup>20</sup> But there is no indication that these Indian vessels were anything more than coastal craft. With the rise of the Mahratha power during the latter half of the seventeenth century a Hindu fleet was established for a time under the rule of Sivaji, the great Mahratha chief, who liberated Central India from the Mughals. Unfortunately the admiral's son, who succeeded him in office, turned pirate; and a predatory community established itself upon the Western coast until its principal stronghold was stormed by a combined British and Mahratha force in 1756.

But with the coming of Portuguese, Dutch, British and French adventurers into those tropic seas we read no more of Indian merchants plying their trade abroad in ships owned and manned by Indians. Was it the paralysing hand of the Mughal conqueror that had fallen upon the ports of Gujerat? Or did these strangers from the West, who

preyed by custom upon one another, turn their artillery with equal readiness upon the unprotected native vessels? History tells us little.

Macaulay, however, makes some reference to piracy in the Indian Ocean towards the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup> "Adventurers who durst not show themselves in the Thames found a ready market for their ill-gotten spices and stuffs at New York. Even the Puritans of New England, who in sanctimonious austerity surpassed even their brethren of Scotland, were accused of conniving at the wickedness, which enabled them to enjoy abundantly and cheaply the produce of Indian looms and Chinese tea plantations." Against these pests was sent the notorious Captain Kidd, carrying with him "besides the ordinary letters of marque, a commission under the Great Seal empowering him to seize pirates, and to take them to some place where they might be dealt with according to law."

The worthy captain, however, found piracy itself more profitable. "He began by robbing Mussulmans, and speedily proceeded from Mussulmans to Armenians, from Armenians to Portuguese. The *Adventure Galley* took such quantities of cotton and silk, sugar and coffee, cinammon and pepper that the very foremast men received from a hundred to two hundred pounds each. . . . He burned houses; he massacred peasantry." Kidd does not appear to have known where to draw the line, and (failing to confine his depredations to Mussulmans, Armenians and Portuguese) he came to a bad end at Execution Dock. According to Macaulay the Indian Ocean "swarmed with pirates" of this kind "of whose rapacity and cruelty frightful stories were told."

Whether these pirates contributed to the annihilation of Indian shipping or not it is difficult to say. Whatever the cause, the overseas trade of India passed into the hands of the White Sahibs to whom this great Sub-continent was the promised land of destiny.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Since this chapter was written the Catholic aristocracy, which overthrew the Moors and persecuted them as infidels, has brought them back into Spain as the saviours of the Christian Church.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting example of the misdemeanours of the Moors is to be found in an extract from the "Apostacies and Treasons of the Moriscos," drawn up by the Archbishop of Valencia in 1602 and quoted by Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Glimpses of World History*. The Moriscos (or Moors), says the Archbishop, "Commended nothing so much as that liberty of conscience in all matters of religion which the Turks, and all other Mohammedans, suffer their subjects to enjoy." This is surely an unconscious confession that, at the commencement of the seventeenth century, the dynasties of Islam felt far more secure than those of Christendom.

<sup>3</sup> See Mill's *History of British India*, Vol I, p. 13 (Fifth Edition).

Another version of the origin of Empire was recently given by Sir Thomas Inskip, however. He said that "when the English people dipped into the Bible they began to realise the greatness of the world and the possibilities of achieving something greater than the mere occupation of their native country." (Speech as reported in the *Bristol Evening World*, October 7th, 1936.)

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Mill Vol I, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> The Charter conferred a monopoly of the Indian Trade upon the Company. It was often infringed, but only finally abolished in 1813.

<sup>6</sup> Mill. Vol I, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Mill. Vol I, p. 24. The Great Mughal sent Sir Thomas strange presents. "Hoggs flesh, deare, a theefe and a whore" was his description of bounties received.

<sup>8</sup> Mill. Vol I, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Mill, Vol I, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Ovington in 1696 extols the wealth of India and says "we cannot deny it that Transcendency which its Monarch pretends to, of being Superior to other Nations of the Earth." (*Voyage to Suratt in 1689*. London, 1696.)

<sup>11</sup> Torrens in his work *Empire in Asia* (1872) remarks that "during the reigns of the earlier Emperors of Delhi to the middle of the seventeenth century complete tolerance was shown to all religions." He points out that there was no religious distinction in making Civil appointments. Thomas Munro emphasised the same point. (See Dutt's *Economic History of British India*, Vol I, p. 321.) See also Walter Hamilton's *East India Gazetteer* (London, 1829) Vol II, p. 478.

<sup>12</sup> The name *Hindustani* is used to-day to include both *Hindi* and *Urdu*, the difference between the two being mainly the fact that essentially the same language is called *Urdu* when written in Arabic characters and *Hindi* when Sanskrit characters are used. In its various dialects it is understood by about half the present population of India.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Jawaharlal Nehru in *Glimpses of World History*, Vol I, pp. 486, 487.

<sup>13</sup> Ovington mentions the suppression of *Sati* by the Mughals and says it was in his time "almost laid aside by the Orders which the *Nabobs* receive for suppressing and extinguishing it in their Provinces. And now it is very rare, except it be some *Rajah's* wives." *Voyage to Suratt* in 1689, by J. Ovington, M.A., Chaplain to His Majesty. (London, 1696.) See also *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Article on *Suttee*.

<sup>14</sup> About the same time the American trade in African slaves was begun by Sir John Hawkins.

<sup>15</sup> *Glimpses of World History*, Vol I, p. 489.

Edward Thompson in his *History of India* points out that Akbar was amazed that the Portuguese burnt heretics and that "what he would have thought of our witch burnings we can guess, for he detested *Suttee* and tried to put it down more courageously and with more success than our own Government in its vacillating efforts prior to 1829. . . . If civilisation is more than a high standard of material comfort . . . the balance is certainly on Akbar's side against any contemporary ruler in the world."

Similar views are expressed by Vincent Smith in the *Oxford History of India*.

<sup>16</sup> Mill, Vol I, p. 116. The Moslem conquerors, however, brought with them the profession of the historian; and one of them has recorded the security of life and property under the reign of Shir Shah, the usurper who followed Babar. His vivid sentences are quoted in the *Cambridge Shorter History of India*. (p. 334).

<sup>17</sup> Quoted by R. C. Dutt in his *Economic History of British India*, Vol I, pp. 386-7.

Mr. Isaiah Bowman, Ph.D., Director of the American Geographical Society of New York, writes in his section on India in *The New World* (London, 1926): "Through all the long and complicated history of India . . . the village organisation and confederations of village communities have been maintained. These confederations have been the most durable organisation in India, and the improvement of Indian conditions can be carried on only if attention is paid to the value of the village community as the basis of self-government." How far this maxim has been followed will be examined in Chapter VIII.

<sup>18</sup> These facts concerning Indian shipping are taken from the *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol I, Pt. I, "History of Gujerat."

<sup>19</sup> Quoted by Digby in *Prosperous British India*.

<sup>20</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 522.

In the museum at Madras there are willow pattern plates in which there are no human figures. Moslems have a religious objection to the pictorial representation of animal life, which they regard as a form of idolatry; and it is clear that these plates were made expressly for the Indian market in the days of Mohammedan rule. They are possibly the last indication of any systematic trade conducted directly between India and the Far East until that trade was resumed under British rule.

<sup>21</sup> *History of England*, Chapter XXV.

## CHAPTER II

### BIRDS OF PREY AND PASSAGE

AKBAR died in the year 1605. No succeeding Emperor equalled him either in power or character. The seventeenth century in India was an age of magnificence which saw the building of the Taj Mahal and the making of the famous Peacock Throne; but it was also an age of social disintegration. The one virtue of autocrats, which is strength, declined among the unrivalled luxuries of the Mughal court. "Power always corrupts," said Lord Acton, "Absolute power absolutely corrupts." So it was with the Mughals in India.

With Aurungzib, who came to the throne in 1659, the country was thrown back a hundred years in its development by a policy of religious intolerance. Hindu temples were destroyed in many parts of the land and a poll-tax was imposed upon the Hindu population. Though warned by his subjects, this bigoted emperor pursued a policy which impoverished the country and created disunion among its people. Nor did they recover unity until a new foreign conqueror had taken advantage of their problems and subdued the entire land to his rule.

In Europe meanwhile the balance of power was slowly shifting. In a past generation Captain John Smith had reported a Spanish soldier's saying that "The sun never sets on the Spanish Dominion";<sup>1</sup> but France was already supplanting Spain as the leading power of the European continent. The appearance of a French East India Company in 1664~~was~~ was therefore an important challenge to the British merchants. Neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch had proved formidable rivals, but the conflicting interests of France and England were more evenly matched in their armaments. While the princes of India fought among themselves for the spoils of the Mughal Empire, a more desperate



struggle was being prepared in which the princes were to be the pawns of European Powers.

In 1639 the East India Company had obtained land at Madras on which they built themselves a fort. Bombay had been held by the Portuguese since 1530, but passed into English hands in 1662, as part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry on her marriage to Charles II. Six years later it was leased to the Company.<sup>2</sup> The third great centre of British penetration was established at Calcutta in 1690. A premature effort on the part of the Company to seize political power was made in 1686, when a military expedition was sent against Aurungzib; but this attempt was a complete failure; and for the rest of the century the Company confined its activities to the trade passing through its factories. "Scarcely any man," wrote Macaulay, "however sagacious, would have thought it possible that a trading company, separated from India by 15,000 miles of sea, and possessing only a few acres for the purpose of commerce, would, in less than a hundred years, spread its empire from Cape Cormorin to the eternal snows of the Himalayas."<sup>3</sup>

With the eighteenth century comes the end of the Mughal power. In the North-west the Sikhs rebelled and set up an independent state in the Punjab—"the Land of the Five Rivers." The Sikh community had been founded by the great religious leader, Nanak, who had endeavoured, like other progressive spirits of his age, to combine what was best in the Hindu and Moslem religions. From the Hindu tradition Nanak took the doctrine of non-violence, and for generations this was a dominant characteristic of his followers. But the policy of the later Mughal rulers forced this peaceful community to build up one of the most formidable fighting organisations in India's military history.

In Central India a new Hindu power was rising at the same time to challenge the Mughal despots. Though they had a warlike past, the Mahrathas, in common with other Hindu peoples, were innocent of any desire to proselytize, and consequently had no tradition of religious wars. An eighteenth century observer wrote of the Hindu religion that it could be called

“an amiable, august and venerable object of speculation, having for a long succession of ages formed a race of mild, friendly, patient and laborious men. Several of its tenets are indeed grossly erroneous, but amidst all the various errors by which the several nations have been misled, no blood was ever spilt on their account. They have never spread fire and sword among mankind.”<sup>4</sup>

The tyrannies of the Mughals had created, however, a new phenomenon in Indian history—a form of Hindu nationalism which was directed against the Moslem conqueror. Of this new nationalism the Mahratha chiefs were the spear-head, and their wars may be distinguished from mere dynastic struggles. Something in the nature of a national consciousness was slowly taking shape; while the first symptoms of social revolt are to be found in the peasant risings that took place in certain localities.<sup>5</sup>

Facing this slow paralysis of its power throughout India, the Mughal Empire was in no condition to meet the blow which now descended suddenly upon Delhi from the north. The descendants of Akbar and the Emperors of Samarkand, whose victorious line derived from Tamurlane and Genghis Khan, were now to be themselves the prey of conquerors following in the footsteps of Babar. Twice in twenty years their capital was sacked and plundered by the marauding hosts of Persia, led by Nadir Shah and his successor Ahmed Shah Durrani. Upon the fateful field of Panipat, where Babar had won the wealth of India for the Mughal dynasty, Durrani met the advancing armies of the Mahrathas, whose power had spread northwards over the ruins of the Delhi Empire. The Persian Shah was victorious, but was obliged to return to his own dominions, leaving the Mahratha chiefs the strongest force in India that could grapple with her new enemies. For while the armies of the Mughals and the Mahrathas had been concentrated upon the Northern plains the British merchants had made themselves virtual masters of Bengal.

The genius of a Frenchman (Dupleix) had first conceived the possibility of a European Empire in India; and to achieve this end in the interests of France he knew that he must first destroy his British rivals. French mercenaries,

with their superior European arms, were hired by the Indian Princes in their wars, and the French grew powerful in the south to the peril of the British settlement at Madras. Here the inhabitants in 1746 were bombarded by a French fleet and compelled to capitulate; saving their town by a ransom to the French commander, Labourdonnais.<sup>6</sup>

The tactics of Dupleix were imitated with even more success on the other side by Robert Clive. The British in the campaigns that followed had both the supremacy on the seas and the interest of their home government (given more grudgingly on the French side) to assist their plans. Both these factors were essential to adversaries contending at such a distance from their home shores, and the British proved victorious because in both respect they were better placed.

The battle of Plassey in 1757 marks, however, the real turning-point in Indian history. Suraj-ad-dowla, the Subahdar of Bengal, had quarrelled with the East India Company's representatives in Calcutta. The nominal causes of this quarrel were the building of new British batteries on the Hugli and the fact that the British had given shelter to a fugitive from the Subahdar's dominions; but it is probable that much weightier reasons prompted the attack which Suraj-ad-dowla made upon the Company's factories in Bengal. Mr. H. H. Dodwell says that "he had been alarmed by the events which had been taking place in Southern India, and had been closely watching the Europeans settled on the Hugli, lest they should attempt to repeat in Bengal operations which had involved the overthrow or death of four Muslim rulers in the Carnatic and the Deccan."<sup>7</sup>

Having seized an English factory at Kasimbazar, Suraj-ad-dowla therefore marched suddenly upon Calcutta, and captured Fort William. All the English residents, except those who had sought refuge on the Company's ships, were taken prisoners; but when their leader, Mr. Holwell, was brought bound before Suraj-ad-dowla the latter ordered him to be set loose "and assured him, upon the faith of a soldier, that of the heads of him and his companions, not a hair should be touched."<sup>8</sup>

The story of what followed is familiar to every English

schoolboy under the name of the Black Hole of Calcutta. As there has been considerable controversy concerning this incident, it is perhaps a pardonable digression to state some of the points of view that have been expressed with regard to it.

According to James Mill the death of the Black Hole victims was due to an accident:

"When evening, however, came, it was a question with the guards to whom they were intrusted, how they might be secured for the night. Some search was made for a convenient apartment; but none was found; upon which information was obtained of a place which the English themselves had employed as a prison. It was unhappily a small, ill-aired, and unwholesome dungeon, called the Black Hole; and the English had their own practice to thank for suggesting it to the officers of the Subahdar as a fit place of confinement. Out of 143 unfortunate individuals thrust in, only twenty-three were taken out alive in the morning."<sup>9</sup>

In further explanation, Mill appends an important footnote. "The atrocities of English imprisonment at home," he writes, "not then exposed to detestation by the labours of Howard, too naturally reconciled Englishmen abroad to the use of dungeons: of *Black Holes* . . . Had no *Black Hole* existed (as none ought to exist anywhere, least of all in the sultry and unwholesome climate of Bengal) those who perished in the Black Hole of Calcutta would have experienced a different fate." Mill then quotes from a Select (Parliamentary) Committee which described the common jail at Calcutta as "a miserable and pestilential place," and he reproduces the evidence given on this subject by two witnesses, one of whom said:

"The gaol is an old ruin of a house; there were very few windows to admit air, and those very small. He asked the gaoler how many souls were then confined in the prison? Who answered, upwards of 170, blacks and whites included—that there was no gaol allowance, that many persons had died for want of the necessaries of life. The nauseous smells, arising from such a crowded place, were beyond expression. Besides the prisoners, the

number of women and attendants, to carry in provisions and dress victuals, was so great, that it was astonishing that any person could long survive such a situation. It was the most horrible place he ever saw, take it altogether. The other witness said, It is divided into small apartments, and those very bad; the stench dreadful, and more offensive than he ever experienced in this country—that there is no thorough draft of air—the windows are neither large nor numerous—the rooms low—that it would be impossible for any European to exist any length of time in the prison—that debtors and criminals were not separated.”<sup>10</sup>

A different view was taken of the evidence by Horace Wilson, who edited and extended the work of James Mill. He held that the Black Hole “was no dungeon at all; it was a chamber above ground, small and ill-aired only with reference to the number of persons forced into it.” Mr. Wilson regarded the incident as “an exemplification of Mohammedan insolence, intolerance and cruelty; and in contemplating the signal retribution by which it has been punished, a mind susceptible of reverence, though free from superstition, can scarcely resist the impression that the course of events was guided by higher influences than the passions and purposes of man.”<sup>11</sup>

On the Indian side we find that the contemporary historian who wrote the *Siyar Mutakharin* and described the capture of Calcutta does not so much as mention this incident though he was opposed to Suraj-ad-dowla, whom he regarded as a usurper. Mill quotes a note by the translator of this work, who claimed that the story of the Black Hole was unknown in Bengal.<sup>12</sup> In modern times some doubt had even been thrown on the historicity of this event, on the grounds that, though there are various accounts by alleged survivors, all bear indications of having been copied from the same source, and that source a doubtful one. In such confusion of opinion perhaps the best summing-up is that given by Mr. Dodwell: “This event does not deserve the title of ‘massacre’ by which it has long been known, for there is nothing to show that the fate of the prisoners was in any way designed. But neither does there

appear ground for discrediting the evidence of more than one survivor or for supposing that no such incident occurred.”<sup>13</sup>

These events took place in 1756, and before the end of the year Clive reached the Hugli with five King's ships and five of the Company's, bearing British troops and “Sepoys,” as the Indian soldiers with European arms and training were called. “Just at this crisis,” writes the contemporary Indian historian of the *Siyar Mutakharin*, “the flames of war broke out between the French and English—two nations who had disputes between themselves, of five or six hundred years' standing, and who, after proceeding to bloodshed, wars, battles and massacres for a number of years, would lay down their arms by common agreement and take breath on both sides, in order to come to blows again and to fight with as much fury as ever.”<sup>14</sup>

The French at that time had a small force in Bengal with field artillery, and by combining with the army of Suraj-ad-dowla could almost certainly have defeated the forces under Clive. The British, however, appear to have heard of the outbreak of war in Europe before the French; and Clive hastened to effect a treaty with the ruler of Bengal before the French commander, realising the situation, could make so dangerous an alliance.

In February of 1757 a treaty was therefore concluded between Suraj-ad-dowla and the British. The Subahdar agreed to restore the Company's factories with all the privileges they had enjoyed in the past. The Company were to be allowed to fortify Calcutta, and to be compensated for their losses in the war. In addition to this an alliance, both offensive and defensive, was proposed by Suraj-ad-dowla and ratified by both parties.<sup>15</sup>

The question now arose as to whether the British, having made peace with Suraj-ad-dowla, should immediately attack the French or should come to a local agreement of neutrality. For a time the latter counsel prevailed, more especially as the Subahdar, who does not appear at any time to have trusted the British, wished to remain at peace with both parties. The situation was completely changed, however, by the news that Ahmed Shah Durrani had

captured Delhi and was threatening Bengal. Suraj-ad-dowla immediately wrote to his new British allies for support; and the very day that this letter was received, revealing a new embarrassment in the Subahdar's position, reinforcements arrived from Bombay for the British forces.<sup>16</sup>

The treaty signed with Suraj-ad-dowla less than a month before had now no longer any value. Clive resolved to attack both the French and the Bengal Government, if necessarily simultaneously. James Mill quotes Clive's own account of the deliberations by which this decision was reached at a committee of four, consisting of Clive, the Governor (Mr. Drake) and two others:

"Mr. Becher gave his opinion for a neutrality, Major Kilpatrick, for a neutrality; he himself gave his opinion for the attack of the place; Mr. Drake gave an opinion that nobody could make anything of. Major Kilpatrick then asked him, whether he thought the forces and squadron could attack Chandernagor and the Nabob's army at the same time?—he said, he thought they could; upon which Major Kilpatrick desired to withdraw his opinion, and to be of his. They voted Mr. Drake's no opinion at all; and Major Kilpatrick and he being the majority, a letter was written to Admiral Watson, desiring him to co-operate in the attack on Chandernagor."<sup>17</sup>

It is not uninteresting to note that such an important historical decision was taken in such an unorthodox manner, upon which Mill gives his comment that "there is something ludicrous in voting a man's opinion to be no opinion; yet the indecisive, hesitating, ambiguous propositions of men who know not what resolution to take, cannot, in general, perhaps, be treated by a better rule."

The French were accordingly attacked, and simultaneously intrigues were started to engineer a rebellion in Bengal against the Subahdar. In later years Clive told the House of Commons "that after Chandernagor was resolved to be attacked, he repeatedly said to the Committee, as well as to others, that they could not stop there, but must go further; that having established themselves by force and not by consent of the Nabob, he would endeavour to

drive them out again." Clive therefore suggested "the necessity of a revolution," which was agreed upon, whilst "the management of that revolution was, with consent of the Committee, left to Mr. Watts, who was resident at the Nabob's capital."<sup>18</sup>

Mir Jafar was the name of the officer "pitched upon to be the person to place in the room of Suraj-ad-dowla," according to Clive's own statement. The basis of the bargain agreed upon by the two parties was that in return for British support against their ally Suraj-ad-dowla, to overthrow the Subahdar and put Mir Jafar in his place, Mir Jafar promised, on seizing the Government, to pay an enormous sum of money to the Company and its servants. This sum included 10,000,000 rupees to the East India Company itself, 5,000,000 rupees to the English inhabitants of Calcutta, 2,500,000 for the naval squadron, 280,000 each for Clive himself and the Governor, and 240,000 each for the other members of the Calcutta Committee.<sup>19</sup>

Such was the situation when the British forces marched against Suraj-ad-dowla. Mir Jafar found it impossible to desert with his troops before the battle of Plassey, because, as he explained in a letter to the British, the suspicions of the Subahdar had been aroused. He had been forced to swear allegiance upon the Koran, and found it impossible to put his plans into operation till he was actually on the battlefield. The famous battle of Plassey, which took place on June 23rd, 1757, was in reality won before it was fought. The intrigues in the Bengal court<sup>20</sup> had made the entire army of Suraj-ad-dowla utterly unreliable, and Mir Jafar's forces took no part in the mock conflict. "The battle," writes Mill, "was nothing but a distant cannonade." After this had continued the greater part of the day Clive observed that Mir Jafar was moving off with his troops. He therefore advanced, and the Subahdar, who, in the words of Clive,<sup>21</sup> "had no confidence in his army nor his army in him," fled from the field.

Bengal had been won with a loss on the Company's side of twenty British soldiers (killed or wounded) sixteen Sepoys killed and thirty-six wounded. Mir Jafar, who now seized the Government according to plan, was a mere puppet in



the hands of the Company. Suraj-ad-dowla was caught and assassinated; and nothing remained for the moment but the payment of the vast sums promised to the Company and its officers for their assistance.

It was now realised for the first time that these amounts were so excessive as to be impossible. Provision, however, had been made by Clive to write off at least a considerable portion of the total sum. Among the agents employed by the Company to intrigue at the Bengal court was a wealthy Indian merchant named Omichand, who had often been used by the Company as an intermediary in its negotiations with the Bengal Government. When Suraj-ad-dowla had attacked Calcutta Omichand had been thrown into prison by the Government of Calcutta on suspicion of complicity with the enemy, and during the war his possessions had been plundered.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of these misfortunes Omichand had supplied with provisions those of the British residents who had suffered more than himself and he had interceded with Suraj-ad-dowla on behalf of his prisoners. After this Omichand left Calcutta with the Subahdar and his army and acted in concert with Mr. Watts of the East India Company to bring about the downfall of the Indian ruler. In the negotiations that followed between the Company and the conspirators as to the amounts to be paid from the Bengal treasury to the various participants in the plot, it is alleged that Omichand threatened to disclose the whole affair if he did not receive as his share a quarter of the jewels and five per cent of the treasure.

This exorbitant demand was met by Clive with apparent acquiescence. Two treaties were drawn up between Mir Jafar and the Company, one stipulating and ratifying Omichand's terms and one in which Omichand was not mentioned. The first treaty was a dummy, merely to show to the Indian merchant in order to convince him. The second was the real treaty, as agreed upon by the Company and the other conspirators, and later put into effect. Admiral Watson, who commanded the British naval squadron on the Hugli, refused to sign the dummy treaty, having certain scruples of conscience; but this difficulty the Calcutta

Committee circumvented by forging his name.<sup>23</sup> Thus a considerable sum was saved by the foresight of Clive; but it was still impossible to realise in full the amounts promised to the Company and its servants, to whom the treasury of the new government was now heavily mortgaged.

Lord Macaulay, in his essay on Clive, has aptly summarised the process that now developed from the financial indebtedness and military dependence which henceforward made the rulers of Bengal the helpless vassals of the British merchants:

"The servants of the Company," writes Macaulay, "obtained—not for their employers but for themselves—a monopoly of almost the whole internal trade. They forced the natives to buy dear and sell cheap . . . Every servant of a British factor was armed with all the power of his master, and his master was armed with all the power of the Company. Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while thirty millions of human beings were reduced to the last extremity of wretchedness. They had been accustomed to live under tyranny, but never under tyranny like this."<sup>24</sup>

These eighteenth century adventurers make a fascinating study for those who would follow the course of empire from the buccaneer to the missionary. The ships in which they sailed from 1748 to 1772—the famous "East India Men"—were mostly of one size, 499 tons, for the very simple reason that all craft of 500 tons and over were compelled by law to carry a chaplain!<sup>25</sup> The merchants were conscious neither of a civilising mission nor of a sacred trust. They had come to make money, and they made it.

The result of these exploits was swiftly experienced in England, where a corrupt political system now became a hunting-ground of those who had acquired their fortunes abroad. Among them were the "nabobs" (as these *nouveaux riches* of the East were called) who returned to England and bought up the "rotten boroughs" with the treasure of India.

Hence it came about that, only ten years after the battle of Plassey, Lord Chesterfield, having in vain offered £2,500

for a seat in Parliament which he desired for his son, wrote to inform him that

"there was no such thing as a borough to be had now, for that the rich East and West Indians had secured them all at the rate of £3,000 at least, but many at £4,000, and two or three that he knew at £5,000."<sup>26</sup>

The effect on the industrial life of Britain was no less drastic. "Very soon after Plassey," writes Mr. Brook Adams, "the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London, and the effect appears to have been instantaneous, for all authorities agree that the 'industrial revolution,' the event which has divided the nineteenth century from all antecedent time, began with the year 1760. . . . Possibly since the world began no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years Great Britain stood without a competitor."<sup>27</sup>

In later chapters we shall follow further the political and economic consequences in Britain of the conquest of India by the East India Company. So far the process had only begun. Clive appears to have attempted to check the rapacity of his subordinates to some extent, but (as Thompson and Garratt make clear in their *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule*):

"Clive's enormous greed provided an example against which his severity towards others . . . was entirely ineffective. For the monstrous financial immorality of English conduct in India for many a year after this, Clive was largely responsible."<sup>28</sup>

The same authorities have recorded that "a gold-lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind. Bengal, in particular, was not to know peace again until it had been bled white." But it was the great eighteenth century statesman Edmund Burke, who, in one of his most memorable speeches, summed up in these words the conquest of Bengal, and the consequences to its inhabitants:

"The Asiatic conquerors very soon abated of their ferocity, because they made the conquered country their own. They rose or fell with the rise and fall of the territory they lived in. Fathers there deposited the hopes of their posterity; the children there beheld the monuments of their fathers. Here their lot was finally cast; and it is the normal wish of all that their lot should not be cast in bad land. Poverty, sterility, and desolation are not a recreating prospect to the eye of man, and there are very few who can bear to grow old among the curses of a whole people. If their passion or avarice drove the Tartar lords to acts of rapacity or tyranny, there was time enough, even in the short life of man, to bring round the ill effects of the abuse of power upon the power itself. If hoards were made by violence and tyranny, they were still domestic hoards, and domestic profusion, or the rapine of a more powerful and prodigal hand, restored them to the people. With many disorders, and with few political checks upon power, nature had still fair play, the sources of acquisition were not dried up, and therefore the trade, the manufactures, and the commerce of the country flourished. Even avarice and usury itself operated both for the preservation and the employment of national wealth. The husbandman and manufacturer paid heavy interest, but then they augmented the fund from which they were again to borrow. Their resources were dearly bought, but they were sure, and the general stock of the community grew by the general effect.

"But under the English Government all this order is reversed. The Tartar invasion was mischievous, but it is our protection that destroys India. It was their enmity, but it is our friendship. Our conquest there, after twenty years, is as crude as it was the first day. The natives scarcely know what it is to see the grey head of an Englishman; young men, boys almost, govern there, without society, and without sympathy with the natives. They have no more social habits with the people than if they still resided in England; nor, indeed, any species of intercourse but that which is necessary to making a sudden fortune, with a view to a remote settlement. Animated with all the avarice of age, and all the impetuosity of youth, they roll in one after another; wave after wave, and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an

endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting. Every rupee of profit made by an Englishman is lost for ever to India."<sup>29</sup>

Such was the situation in Bengal, at the mercy of these "birds of prey and passage" who over-ran the country after the battle of Plassey. Lord Clive (as he had become in reward for his services) on his arrival in India for the third time in 1765 himself denounced the corruption of which he was the father. "Alas," he said, "how is the English name sunk! I could not avoid paying the tribute of a few tears to the departed and lost fame of the British nation—irrevocably so, I fear."<sup>30</sup> Nothing less, however, could be expected from the rule of a Company whose governing body exhibited, according to Macaulay "all the trickery and corruption of a Grampound election." Profit and power were the natural objects of its shareholders; and among them Clive himself "laid out a hundred thousand pounds in the purchase of stock, which he then divided among nominal proprietors . . . whom he brought down in his train to every discussion and every ballot."<sup>31</sup> Empire-building had begun in earnest.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Gage's *New Survey of the West Indies* (1648).

<sup>2</sup> The Company paid £10 per annum to the English Crown by way of rent for Bombay.

<sup>3</sup> *Essay on Clive*, by Lord Macaulay.

<sup>4</sup> "Observations on the Manners and Arts of the Africans and Asiatics" in a paper read to the Royal Society of Agriculture at Lyons (1764) and that of Paris (1766) by Monsieur Poivre, Intendant of the Isles de France et Bourbon, and former envoy to the King of Cochin-China. The quotation is from a summary of this paper given in the *Court Miscellany* for June, 1769.

<sup>5</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, referring to these risings in his *Glimpses of World History*, quotes a Mughal noble who called those in revolt "a gang of bloody miserable rebels, goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners, and other ignoble beings."

<sup>6</sup> The early campaigns took place in the South of India, where a French empire was built up and destroyed within a few years, between 1744 and 1763.

<sup>7</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 548. •

<sup>8</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 117.

<sup>9</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 117.

Macaulay, who does not share Mill's view, unconsciously confirms his comment by remarking that the English were confined in "the prison of the garrison, a chamber known by the fearful name of the Black Hole. Even for a single European malefactor that dungeon would, in such a climate, have been too close and narrow." (*Essay on Clive*.)

<sup>10</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 117. First Report, Appendix No. XI.

<sup>11</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 118. Wilson's footnote to 5th Edition.

<sup>12</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 118.

<sup>13</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 548.

Professor Thompson, in his *History of India*, accepts the historicity of the incident, but describes it as "the same kind of stupid brutality that our own record contains in the asphyxiation of over eighty Moplah prisoners in railway vans in 1921."

<sup>14</sup> *Siyar Mutakharin*, I, 759.

<sup>15</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 126.

<sup>17</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 127 (footnote).

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by Mill, Vol III, p. 129.

<sup>19</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 130.

In addition to this 280,000 rupees, as a member of the Committee, Clive also received 200,000 as Commander-in-Chief and 1,600,000 as a "private donation." The sum total came to over £200,000 at the current rate of exchange. (Mill, Vol III, p. 257.) Two years later Clive received an estate valued at £30,000 per annum. (See Thompson's *History of India*.) Clive nevertheless expressed himself "Surprised at his own moderation."

<sup>20</sup> The corruption of the Bengal Court was by no means phenomenal in the eighteenth century. Sir Robert Walpole, who died in 1745, is credited with having said of the British Parliament: "I know the price of every man in this House, except three." (Latham's *Famous Sayings and their Origin*.)

<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Mill, Vol III, p. 133 (footnote).

<sup>22</sup> The story of Omichand is given in some detail by Mill (Vol III, pp. 135-6) with a long footnote by Mr. Wilson, somewhat qualifying his conclusions. Clive, according to Mill, was a man "to whom deception, when it suited his purpose, never cost a pang."

<sup>23</sup> "Clive," writes Macaulay of this episode, "was not a man to do anything by halves. We almost blush to write it. He forged Admiral Watson's name." (*Essay on Clive*.)

<sup>24</sup> Macaulay, *Essay on Clive*.

<sup>25</sup> *The Old East India Men*, by E. Keble Chatterton, Lieut. R.N.V.R. The Company, however, employed chaplains at its factories. One is believed to have composed the prayer given at the beginning of this book.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters to his Son* (December 19th, 1767) by Lord Chesterfield. Quoted by Leonard Woolf in *After the Deluge*, p. 96.

<sup>27</sup> *The Law of Civilisation and Decay*, by Brook Adams.

Marx has some interesting comments on this early plunder in *Capital* (p. 834 in the *Everyman* edition).

<sup>28</sup> *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, by Edward Thompson and G. T. Garrett.

<sup>29</sup> From Burke's speech on Fox's East India Bill (1783). Quoted by Dutt in the *Economic History of India*, Vol I, pp. 49-50.

The comment has sometimes been made that Burke had never been in India and that consequently he spoke in ignorance. This criticism was completely answered by Macaulay in his *Essay on Warren Hastings*, where he points out that Burke "had studied the history, the laws and the usages of the East with an industry such as is seldom found united to so much genius and so much sensibility." Readers of Macaulay will remember the purple passage which follows and elaborates this statement.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Macaulay in his *Essay on Clive*.

<sup>31</sup> Macaulay, *Essay on Clive*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BLOODY SCEPTRE

"I WAS not looking at thy private apartments, or at thy queen's. I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy curtains and destroy thine empire."

Such had been the prophetic reply of Tegh Bahadur, ninth *guru* of the Sikhs, when he was accused of staring from his prison window in Delhi toward the harem of the Great Mughal. The prophecy was now reaching its fulfilment, the first step towards which was the consolidation of the Company's power in Bengal.

From the ruler of Bengal the British extracted a concession freeing them from all the inland revenues that were payable on the conveyance of goods. Nominally, this exemption applied only to the property of the Company, but in practice it was claimed by the servants of the Company, who were doing a considerable trade on their own account. The revenue duties, therefore, acted in the manner of a tariff against Indian commerce; Indian trade declined while the Company and its servants made fortunes.<sup>1</sup>

Made arrogant by their military successes the British rapidly extended their operations. Complaint or defiance was met by disastrous reprisals, and gave them an excuse to demand further concessions. Their principal purchase in India was originally cloth, which they sold in England; for this was before the decay of the Indian cotton industry, and some years before the rise of the cloth trade in Lancashire. The Company's servants forced the Indian weavers to sign contracts agreeing to deliver a certain quantity of cloth at a price fixed by the Company. An English merchant named William Bolts, writing in 1772, describes the condition of the Indian weavers as that of slaves. He tells



how they were flogged if they refused to sign the contracts, which fixed prices between 15 per cent and 40 per cent below market rates.<sup>2</sup>

A climax was reached when Mir Kasim, the ruler of Bengal, decided to abolish *all* inland duties to save the Indian merchants from ruin. The Company had demanded exemption on its own account, and upheld the private claims of its servants in which even the highest officials were implicated. "They now" (writes James Mill) "insisted that it" (the government of Bengal) "should impose duties upon the goods of all other traders, and accused it as guilty of a breach of peace towards the English nation because it proposed to remit them."<sup>3</sup> The quarrel ended in the usual way—war, deposition of the prince and his replacement by a puppet heavily indebted to the Company and its servants for the cost of putting him on the throne.

In Britain the operations of the Company were by no means regarded with universal favour. Writing in 1776 Adam Smith, "the Father of Political Economy," passed his judgment in these words upon the East India Company, which had by then become the ruling power in Bengal:<sup>4</sup>

"The Government of an exclusive company of merchants is perhaps the worst of all governments for any country whatever.

"It is the interest of the East India Company considered as sovereigns that the European goods which are carried to their Indian Dominions should be sold there as cheaply as possible; and that the Indian goods which are brought from there should be sold here as dear as possible. But the reverse of this is their interest as merchants. As sovereigns their interest is exactly the same with that of the country which they govern. As merchants their interest is directly opposite to that interest.

"It is a very singular government in which every member of the administration wishes to get out of the country and consequently to have done with the government as soon as he can and to whose interest the day after he has left it and carried his whole fortune with him, he is perfectly indifferent though the whole country was swallowed by an earthquake.

"Frequently, a man of great, sometimes even a man

of moderate fortune is willing to give thirteen or fourteen hundred pounds (the present price of a £1,000 share in India stock) merely for the influence which he expects to acquire by a vote in the Court of Proprietors. It gives him a share, though not in the plunder, yet in the appointment of the plunderers. . . . A man of great or even a man of moderate fortune provided he can enjoy this influence for a few years and thereby get a certain number of his friends appointed to employment in India, frequently cares little about the dividend which he can expect from so small a capital. About the prosperity or ruin of the great empire in the government of which that vote gives him a share he seldom cares at all. No other governments ever were or from the nature of things ever could be so perfectly indifferent about the happiness or misery of their subjects, the improvement or waste of their dominions, the glory or disgrace of their administration, as from irresistible moral causes the greater part of the Proprietors of such a mercantile company are and necessarily must be.”<sup>5</sup>

Between the years 1757 and 1765 the presents known to have been received by British officers and other individual Englishmen, exclusive of the Company's profits, amounted to £2,169,665, in addition to which a further sum of £3,770,833 was obtained from various rulers upon a variety of pretexts, as “restitutions” for alleged damages.<sup>6</sup> The sums involved can only be fully appreciated in relation both to the greater relative value of money in India than its equivalent in the West, and the steady fall in monetary values since 1765.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian chronicler of the *Siyar Mutakharin* viewed these contemporary events with considerable dismay. Whilst he admired the military qualities of the new masters of Bengal, he was appalled at the insatiability of their appetites.

“They join,” he wrote, “the most resolute courage to the most cautious prudence; nor have they their equals in the art of ranging themselves in battle array and in fighting order. If to so many military qualifications they knew how to join the arts of government; if

they showed a concern for the circumstances of the husbandman and the gentleman, and exerted as much ingenuity and solicitude in relieving and easing the people of God as they do in whatever concerns their military affairs, no nation in the world would be preferable to them, or prove worthier of command. But such is the little regard which they show to the people of these kingdoms, and such their apathy and indifference for their welfare, that the people under their dominions groan everywhere, and are reduced to poverty and distress. O God! come to the assistance of thine afflicted servants, and deliver them from the oppressions they suffer.”<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile the evidences of a new civilisation were gradually finding expression in the Company’s settlements. The tombs of the kings of Gour were plundered to make the pavement of St. John’s Church at Calcutta, to which the unfortunate Omichand unwittingly contributed. Omichand had died in 1763, leaving by his will 30,000 rupees “to be bestowed for charitable uses in the way of his religion,” and appointing an Indian friend as his executor and almoner. The Company’s officials, however, decided to put the bequest to another purpose, and used it for the building of a Christian Church.<sup>9</sup> The English narrator who records this transaction in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* remarks that the Company’s action “transfers from him (Omichand) to his executors the credit of the actual appropriation of the sum of 30,000 rupees to this object.”

In Madras a similar progress was being registered. In 1769 a writer in the *Court Miscellany* tells us of the Madras settlement that “there are two Churches, one for the Protestants and the other for the Papists; as also a good hospital, a tavern-hall and a prison for debtors. . . . The Company have two Chaplains, who officiate by turns, and have each £100 a year, besides the advantages of trade; they never attempt to make proselytes, but leave that to the Popish missionaries. The salaries of the Company’s writers are very small, but, if they have any fortune of their own, they make it up by trade, which must generally be the case, for they commonly grow rich.”<sup>10</sup>

Whilst the Company's servants grew prosperous, the Company itself was also showing big profits for its shareholders. One of the main sources of wealth for the Company was its "Investment," the nature of which was described by a Select Committee of the House of Commons:

"A certain portion of the revenues of Bengal has been, for many years, set apart in the purchase of goods for exportation to England, and this is called the Investment. The greatness of this Investment has been the standard by which the merit of the Company's principal servants has been too generally estimated; and this main cause of the impoverishment of India has been generally taken as a measure of its wealth and prosperity. Numerous fleets of large ships, loaded with the most valuable commodities of the East, annually arriving in England in a constant and increasing succession, imposed upon the public eye, and naturally gave rise to an opinion of the happy condition and growing opulence of a country whose surplus productions occupied so vast a space in the commercial world. This export from India seemed to imply also a reciprocal supply, by which the trading capital employed in those productions was continually strengthened and enlarged. But the payment of a tribute, and not a beneficial commerce, to that country, wore this specious and delusive appearance."<sup>11</sup>

This "Investment," as the Parliamentary Committee recognised, was simply a tribute in goods, which were bought in India (with Indian money from the revenues of Bengal) and sold in England for the profit of the Company. Including this "favourable balance of trade" nearly one-third of the nett revenue of Bengal was annually sent to Britain, as is clearly shown in the Fourth Parliamentary Report of 1773.<sup>12</sup> Over and beyond the cash dividend and the "Investment," and leaving out of account the private fortunes made by methods such as those which Clive employed, Dutt estimates that there must have been a considerable further drain in the savings of European officials, which would have been sent out of the country. There were also "the vast fortunes reared by those who had excluded the country merchants from their legitimate

trades and industries," while £100,000 per annum was sent to subsidise the Company's trade in China.

The Directors of the East India Company were by no means entirely blind to the danger which was caused to their own interests by the impoverishment of the country from which they drew their wealth. Aware that the extortions of their officials in their private interests must eventually compete with the claims of the Company, the Directors made periodic (but mainly ineffectual) efforts to check the activities of their servants.<sup>13</sup> But to the appetite of the Company itself there were no limits.

"There was something," said Sheridan in one of his most famous speeches, "in the first frame and constitution of the Company which extended the sordid principles of their origin over all their successive operations, connecting with their civil policy and even with their boldest achievements the meanness of a pedlar and the profligacy of pirates. Alike in the political and military line could be observed auctioneering ambassadors and trading generals. . . . Thus it was they exhibited a government which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre and the little traffic of a merchant's counting-house, wielding a truncheon with one hand and picking a pocket with the other."<sup>14</sup>

The actual collection of taxes in Bengal was done through Indian officials corresponding to the "fermier" or tax-farmer who was one of the worst curses of France before the Revolution. These officials bought their rights from the Company by auction. The highest bidder was responsible to the Company for the sum at which he had contracted and repaid himself with interest by means of the unlimited powers of extortion conferred upon him. "Thus," wrote Harry Verelst, after his retirement from the Governorship of Bengal, "numberless harpies were let loose to plunder, whom the spoil of a miserable people enabled to complete their first year's payment."<sup>15</sup>

Famine was the inevitable result. In the year 1769, when "India Stock" in London was fluctuating between 275 per cent and 277 per cent,<sup>16</sup> and in Bengal "the revenues

were never so closely collected before," the spectre of starvation was already descending upon the peasantry of India. In the following year (1770) the Calcutta Council of the East India Company recorded that "the famine which has ensued, the mortality, the beggary, exceed all description. Above one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the once plentiful province of Purneah, and in other parts the misery is equal." Their collections of revenue, however, "fell less short than they supposed they would."<sup>17</sup>

In 1771 the Company was even more fortunate: "Notwithstanding the great severity of the late famine," wrote the Calcutta Council to the Court of Directors, "and the great reduction of people thereby, some increase has been made in the settlements both of the Bengal and the Behar provinces for the present year."<sup>18</sup> In the famine of 1770 about 10,000,000 people died (one third of the population of Bengal, according to the official estimate). Throughout this time the drain continued, and in 1772 Warren Hastings was able to boast that "the net collections of 1771 exceeded even those of 1768"—a fact which he attributed to the revenue having been "violently kept up to its former standard." In the words of Macaulay,

"Whatever we may think of the morality of Hastings, it cannot be denied that the financial results of his policy did honour to his talents."<sup>19</sup>

The poet Cowper was among those in England who watched the Company's activities with some misgivings.

"The thieves at home must hang; but he that puts  
Into his over-gorged and bloated purse  
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes."<sup>20</sup>

Such was Cowper's reading of the situation. But a more powerful adversary than the conscience of a humanitarian was already in the field against the Company. The Company's "Investment" was beginning to menace seriously the manufacturing interests in England, and a trade which had brought no profit to India was now regarded by many as equally fatal to Great Britain.

Macaulay quotes a seventeenth century *Discourse concerning the East India Trade, showing it to be unprofitable to the Kingdom*; also *Pierce Butler's Tale, representing the State of the Wool Case, or the East India Trade truly stated*. "Clamours such as these," writes Macaulay, "had, a few years before, extorted from Parliament the Act which required that the dead should be wrapped in woollen; and some sanguine clothiers hoped that the legislators would, by excluding all Indian textures from our ports, impose the same necessity on the living."<sup>21</sup> At an even earlier date we read in Pepys' Diary that:

"Sir Martin Noell told us the dispute between him, as the farmer of the Additional Duty, and the East India Company, whether calico be linen or no; which he says it is, having been ever esteemed so: they say it is made of cotton wool, and grows upon trees, not like flax or hemp. But it was carried against the Company, though they stand out against the verdict."<sup>22</sup>

The Company, however, had continued to maintain its trade in these early years by the favour it purchased with the Court. Josiah Child, who made an enormous fortune from the Indian trade, bought from its proceeds a baronetcy for himself and an aristocratic husband for his daughter. As Governor of the Company he presented ten thousand guineas to Charles II and the same amount to his successor, who even became a stock-holder. "All who could help or hurt at Court," writes Macaulay, "ministers, mistresses, priests, were kept in good humour by presents of shawls and silks, birds' nests and atar of roses, bulses of diamonds and bags of guineas."

The bread of Sir Josiah Child was not cast in vain upon the waters; for when the Company's monopoly was challenged it was upheld by no less an authority than Judge Jeffreys, famous for his Bloody Assize. Crown Commissions were carried by the captains of the Company's ships, which were allowed the use of the royal ensign. "The Company on the other hand, distinguished itself among many servile corporations by obsequious homage to the throne."

By 1735 the competition of Indian trade must have been

seriously felt in England,<sup>23</sup> for it was in that year that the following lines appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*:

"The silk-worms form the wardrobe's gaudy pride;  
How rich the vest which Indian looms provide;  
Yet let me here the British Nymphs advise  
To hide these foreign spoils from native eyes;  
Lest rival artists, murmuring for employ,  
With savage rage the envied work destroy."

Already apprehensive of a rising discontent in England, which was to reach its zenith with the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the Company was now forced to reverse its policy with regard to the trade in manufactured goods. On March 17th, 1769, the Directors wrote to their representatives in Bengal desiring that the production of raw silk should be encouraged and that of manufactured silk discouraged as much as possible. They also proposed that the Company's political power should be used in order to force the silk-winders to work in the Company's factories and to prohibit them from working in their homes.<sup>24</sup>

"This regulation," the Directors informed the Parliamentary Select Committee, "seems to have been productive of very good effects, particularly in bringing over the winders, who were formerly so employed, to work in the factories. Should this practice (the winders working in their own homes) through inattention have been suffered to take place again, it will be proper to put a stop to it, which may now be more effectually done, by an absolute prohibition under severe penalties, by the authority of the Government."<sup>25</sup>

The Select Committee in its report commented on the Company's policy in the following terms:

"This letter," they said, "contains a perfect plan of policy, both of compulsion and encouragement, which must in a very considerable degree operate destructively to the manufactures of Bengal. Its effects must be (so far as it could operate without being eluded) to change the whole face of that industrial country, in order to render it a field for the produce of the crude materials subservient to the manufactures of Great Britain."<sup>26</sup>



This was soon to be the policy of the British Government itself. As yet, however, "John Company" dominated the Indian stage. The industrial magnates of Britain, who were in the end to supersede the Company as the rulers of this growing Empire, were still engaged in a struggle for wealth and power at home.<sup>27</sup> And meanwhile the Company was rapidly becoming the greatest political force in India.

The methods by which the Company consolidated its power and obtained its revenues were notorious for their severity. Professor Thompson tells us of Indian offenders against the Company's rule who were whipped to death at Calcutta in the eighteenth century by a court that could not execute an Englishman without a royal warrant from England. In the last quarter of the century, according to Thompson, mutilation remained "a common punishment" and impalement was practised.<sup>28</sup> He quotes a document of 1773 showing that in that year an Indian was dragged to death by horses at the order of a British Council of Officers.

Indian middlemen and hirelings were not behind their masters in the matter of oppression. At Dinajpur in Bengal the Indian agent of the Company flogged and tortured the cultivators to extort revenue, till at last they deserted their villages. Bands of soldiers brought them back. They rebelled, and the insurrection was put down with great severity.<sup>29</sup> When it was stated at the impeachment of Hastings that revenue defaulters were confined in open cages, it was replied that confinement in such cages under the Indian sun was no torture.<sup>30</sup>

Charges against the Company's servants of high-handedness or embezzlement were refused a hearing or met with savage reprisals.<sup>31</sup> Tribute was exacted from neighbouring states not yet directly under the Company's rule. By way of a return, the Company would quarter an army on the State to "protect" it.<sup>32</sup> The case of Benares affords an example. In spite of protests from Philip Francis,<sup>33</sup> Hastings' demands upon this state became ever more exorbitant. The State defaulted, the Raja fled, and in 1781 the Company assumed direct control. Three years later (according to James Mill) Warren Hastings "passed through the province of Benares,

which in the time of Cheyte Sing and his father manifested so great a degree of prosperity."<sup>34</sup>

Mill then gives Hastings' own comments on the results of the Company's "corrupt and oppressive administration" in his letter to the Council Board dated Lucknow, April 2nd, 1784:

"From the confines of Buxar to Benares I was followed and fatigued by the clamours of the discontented inhabitants. . . . I am sorry to add that from Buxar to the opposite boundary I have seen nothing but traces of complete devastation in every village."

The fate of Oudh was similar. The Raja was made to maintain a British army of which Philip Francis said that it "had devoured his revenues and his country without defending it." Here again villages were deserted and the peasants driven back by the Company's troops. A Captain Edwards who visited Oudh in 1774 reported it to be "flourishing in manufactures, cultivation and commerce." Nine years later he found the country "forlorn and desolate."<sup>35</sup> Others confirmed his report, and Parliamentary Reports have recorded their verdicts.

At the end of the eighteenth century the administration of India continued to be (in Edward Thompson's words) "a mass of corruption" in spite of higher salaries.<sup>36</sup> Hastings was succeeded by Sir John Macpherson, whose administration was described by his own successor (Cornwallis) as "a system of the dirtiest jobbing."<sup>37</sup>

The rule of the Company was challenged occasionally by insurrection, and Mill has given us a graphic account of the suppression, in 1764, of a mutiny among the Sepoy troops. In this year a battalion of Sepoys deserted and attempted to join the forces of an Indian ruler with whom the Company was then at war. The battalion was overtaken during the night, while the men were asleep, and all were made prisoners. Twenty-four of the mutineers were selected as examples, tried, and condemned to die in any manner which the commander should direct.

"He ordered four of them to be immediately tied to the guns, and blown away; when four grenadiers presented

themselves, and begged, as they had always had the post of honour, that they should first be allowed to suffer. After the death of these four men, the European officers of the battalions of Sepoys who were then in the field came to inform the Major that the Sepoys would not suffer the execution of any more. He ordered the artillery officers to load the field pieces with grape; and drew up the Europeans, with the guns in their intervals. He then desired the officers to return to the head of their battalions, after which he commanded the battalions to ground their arms, and assured them if a man attempted to move that he would give orders to fire. Sixteen more of the twenty-four men were then blown away; the remaining four were sent to another place of cantonment, and executed in the same manner. Nothing is more singular than that the same men, in whom it is endeavoured to raise to the highest pitch the contempt of death, and who may be depended upon for meeting it, without hesitation, at the hand of the enemy, should yet tremble, and be subdued, when threatened with it by their own officers."<sup>38</sup>

The impeachment of Warren Hastings represented to a large section of contemporary British opinion rather a protest against the Company itself and its methods than an attack upon an individual.<sup>39</sup> It may well be argued that in impeaching Hastings the enemies of the Company selected the least venal of its officials and even based their case against him on his less important misdemeanours. Sheridan's famous speech, which has already been quoted, shows that feeling was stirred at least as much by the general principles of the Company's administration as it was by the particular faults of Hastings himself. Sheridan, quoting Pitt, said that the Parliamentary Committee which investigated the Company's rule "had discovered in the administration of Mr. Hastings proceedings of strong injustice, of grinding oppression and unprovoked severity." It is perhaps unfortunate that there existed no law by which the Company could have been tried for its extortions from the peasants rather than Hastings for his doubtful dealings with Indian royal families, and other relatively trivial offences.

Of equal interest is the fact that those who are to-day judged "according to the standards of their time" did

not in their own lives find those standards sufficiently low to justify themselves. Hastings, on the contrary, continually defended his actions by citing some alleged Indian practice or precedent.<sup>40</sup> Such was the nature of his defence regarding the treatment of the *Begums*, or princesses, of Oudh, which Sheridan has so vividly described in a speech worth quoting at some length.

"Mr. Hastings," said Sheridan in his memorable indictment, "left Calcutta in 1781, and proceeded to Lucknow, as he said himself, with two great objects in mind: namely Benares and Oude. What was the nature of these boasted resources? That he should plunder one or both: the equitable alternative of a highwayman, who in going forth in the evening hesitates which of his resources to prefer—Bagshot or Hounslow. In such a state of generous irresolution did Mr. Hastings proceed to Benares and Oude.

"At Benares he failed in his pecuniary object. Then and not till then, not on account of any ancient enmities shown by the Begums, not in resentment for any old disturbances, but because he had failed in one place and that he had but two in his prospect, did he conceive the base expedient of plundering these aged women. . . . Inflamed by disappointment in his first project, he hastened to the fortress of Chunar, to mediate the more atrocious design of instigating a son against his mother. . . .

"At Chunar was that infamous treaty concerted with the Nabob Vizier to despoil the princesses of Oude of their hereditary possessions.<sup>41</sup> . . . No sooner was this foundation of iniquity thus instantly established in violation of the pledged faith and solemn guarantee of the British government, no sooner had Mr. Hastings determined to invade the substance of justice, than he resolved to avail himself of the judicial forms, and accordingly dispatched a messenger for the chief justice of India to assist him. . . .<sup>42</sup>

"Mr. Hastings, with much art, proposed a question involving an unsubstantiated fact. . . . 'The Begums being in actual rebellion, might not the Nabob confiscate their property?' 'Most undoubtedly,' was the ready answer of the friendly judge.

"The Chief Justice," said Sheridan, "did not disdain to scud about India like an itinerant informer with a pedlar's pack of garbled evidence. . . . With a generous oblivion of duty and of honour, with a proud sense of having authorised all future rapacity and sanctioned all past oppressions, this friendly judge proceeded on a circuit of health and ease; and while the Governor-General, sanctioned by this solemn opinion, issued his orders to plunder the Begums of their treasure, Sir Elijah pursued his progress, and passing through a wide region of distress and misery, explored a country that presented a speaking picture of hunger and nakedness. . . ."<sup>43</sup>

"Thus, while the executive power in India was perverted to the most disgraceful inhumanities, the judicial authority also became its close and confidential associate. . . . Under such circumstances did Mr. Hastings complete the treaty of Chunar, a treaty that might challenge all the treaties that ever subsisted for containing in the smallest compass the most extensive treachery. Mr. Hastings did not conclude that treaty till he had received from the Nabob a present, or rather, a bribe of £100,000. . . . Four months afterwards, and not then, Mr. Hastings communicated the matter to the Company. Unfortunately for himself, however, this tardy disclosure was conveyed in words which betray his original meaning; for with no common incaution he admits the present 'was of a magnitude not to be concealed.'"<sup>44</sup>

The weight of historical evidence is probably against Sheridan's contention that "the British name and character had been dishonoured and rendered detested throughout India by the malversations and crimes of the principal servant of the East India Company." Hastings was neither the worst administrator nor was he the unique cause of the hatred which the Company inspired. Sheridan was even exaggerating his case when he said that Hastings had about him "nothing great but his crimes"; but he was essentially right in protesting against the view, which persists to the present day, "that the guilt of Mr. Hastings was to be balanced by his successes, that fortunate events were a full and complete set off against a system of oppression, corruption, breach of faith, peculation, and treachery."

A writer in the *Court Miscellany* of 1769<sup>4</sup> had already foreseen the end of an empire built upon such foundations. He gives us the imaginary remarks of two American travellers in the year 1944. The travellers come to London where they meet "in its depopulated streets a poor Briton, who hearing us speak the English language and lamenting the fate of the capital of his country, made up to us and with a dejected countenance and great humility, said, I conclude, gentlemen, you are come from the empire of America."

The Englishman shows the travellers "a field of turnips, where stood the palace of Whitehall; as to St. James's, there is no trace of that left: it stood somewhere near the pond." The article, written before the American War of Independence, tells prophetically how the American Colonies revolted, "being treated more like aliens than fellow subjects." Finally, at the end of the day,

"although fatigued with this day's journey, we ordered our guide to conduct us to the India-house; that, says he, has been destroyed these 150 years; for the blood they shed in about 1760 in India called for vengeance, which overtook them, and they are expelled all Asia; the barbarity and inhumanity committed by them in the Mogul's dominions, about 180 years ago, history tells you their own directors at that time acknowledged."<sup>45</sup>

• British rule, however, was not destined to end so easily. In April, 1769, a month after this anonymous writer had foretold the downfall of the East India Company, a very significant Act was passed in Parliament, embodying an agreement between the Company and the British Government. This Act was designed to silence the growing criticism of the Company's administration by making the British Public co-partners in its exploits, for the most important clause of the Act stipulated that the Company should pay annually £400,000 of its profits into the British Exchequer.<sup>46</sup>

By the same Act the Company's dividends were limited to 12 per cent, any surplus profit beyond this figure to be lent to the Government at an interest of 2 per cent.<sup>47</sup> The

Company also agreed to export annually goods to the value of about £380,000.

The Act of 1769 was one of many steps by which the interest of a chartered company was gradually becoming merged in the general commercial and political life of this country; and as that process evolved we shall find that the whole political weight of Great Britain was brought increasingly to bear upon the development and maintenance of an Empire upon which the national prosperity was being built. But there were some who saw in this process a danger to the life of both countries, and perceived with misgivings this State participation in the spoils of India as well as the new power of corruption exercised in British political life by those who had made their fortunes in the East.

Once more it is Cowper who voices this apprehension and in memorable lines foretells a doom less spectacular, but no less terrible, than that which was prophesied in the *Court Miscellany* :

“Hast thou, though suckled at fair freedom’s breast,  
Exported slavery to the conquered East?  
Pulled down the tyrants India served with dread,  
And raised thyself, a greater in their stead?  
Gone thither, armed and hungry, returned full,  
Fed from the richest veins of the Mogul,  
A despot big with power obtained by wealth,  
And that obtained by rapine and by stealth?  
With Asiatic vices stored thy mind,  
But left their virtues and thine own behind?  
And having trucked thy soul, brought home the fee  
To tempt the poor to sell himself to thee.”<sup>48</sup>

Albeit the cloistered sage was one of many who saw the evil, but could see no remedy. Steeped in the sentimental affection which Warren Hastings had inspired in him from early life, he even championed the instrument of an oppression which his sensitive spirit detested; and Hastings remained to him the hero of his boyhood. “His habits,” wrote Macaulay, “were such that he was unable to conceive how far from the path of right even kind and noble natures may be hurried by the rage of conflict and the lust for dominion.”<sup>49</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Verelst, who succeeded Clive as Governor (1767-1770) has recorded in his *Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal* (Vol I, p. 24) that : "A trade was carried on without payment of duties, in the prosecution of which infinite oppressions were committed. English agents or Gomastahs, not contented with injuring the people, trampled on the authority of government, binding and punishing the Nabob's officers whenever they presumed to interfere." (Quoted by Mill, Vol III, p. 231.)

<sup>2</sup> *Considerations on Indian Affairs* (London, 1772) pp. 191-4. Quoted by Dutt, in his *Economic History of India*, Vol I, pp. 25-7. Bolts stated that "the winders of raw silk . . . have been treated also with such injustice that instances have been known of their cutting off their thumbs to prevent their being forced to wind silk."

<sup>3</sup> Mill, Vol III, p. 237. Mill described the Company's claim as "one of the most remarkable instances upon record of the power of interest to extinguish all sense of justice and even of shame." This opinion is strongly endorsed by Horace Wilson in his footnote.

<sup>4</sup> In 1765 Clive obtained a charter from the Great Mughal whereby the Company was formally recognised as the administrative authority in Bengal.

<sup>5</sup> *The Wealth of Nations* (Book IV, Chap. 7) by Adam Smith (1776.)

The Company, as Macaulay points out in his *Essay on Warren Hastings*, "never enjoined or applauded any crime," but their excellent precepts were "nullified by a demand for money." As the Church dealt with a heretic, so the Company's Directors "delivered the victim over to the executioners, with an earnest request that all possible tenderness might be shown." Hastings (and others after him) found it necessary, therefore, "to neglect the sermons and to find the rupees."

<sup>6</sup> These figures, which were given in the House of Commons Committee's Third Report (1773), p. 311, are quoted in greater detail by Dutt in his *Economic History*, Vol. I, pp. 32-3.

<sup>7</sup> Even in the present age a few pence per day constitutes the average income of the Indian peasant. According to Vakil and Muranjan in their *Currency and Prices of India*, the rupee fell between 1881 and 1921 to a quarter of its value at the beginning of that period. To grasp these figures one must therefore take into account not only the low standard of living in India, but the higher value of money throughout the world in the 18th century.

<sup>8</sup> *Siyar Mutakharin*, Vol II, p. 101. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 22-3, and by Macaulay in his *Essay on Clive*.

<sup>9</sup> An account of this interesting and typical transaction is given in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of March, 1824. A further 30,000 rupees was contributed by the Company (out of the Bengal revenues) for the building of this church.

<sup>10</sup> *Court Miscellany*, June, 1769.

<sup>11</sup> Ninth Report of 1783, p. 54. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 48-9. Dutt quotes Harry Verelst's comment on the "Investment": "Whatever sums had formerly been remitted to Delhi were amply reimbursed by the returns made to the immense commerce of Bengal. . . . How widely different from these are the present circumstances of the Nabob's



dominions! . . . Each of the European Companies, by means of money taken up in the country, have greatly enlarged their annual Investments, without adding a rupee to the riches of the province." (*View of the Rise of the English Government in Bengal*, Appendix, p. 117.)

The Report of 1783 valued the "Investment" at nearly £1,200,000 per annum, and never less than a million. It pointed out that the "Investment" was "forcibly kept up" even during the famine of 1770, "which wasted Bengal in a manner dreadful beyond all example."

<sup>12</sup> Fourth Report, 1773, p. 535. Dutt (Vol I, p. 46) quotes an interesting table of figures from this report, showing that the gross collection of revenue in Bengal from May, 1765, to April, 1771, was about £20,000,000. This yielded a net income of about £13,000,000 after deducting various allowances, salaries and other costs of collection; and of this £13,000,000, £4,000,000 was profit for the Company.

<sup>13</sup> The House of Commons Committee's Fourth Report (1773) quotes a statement by the Directors of the Company that "We think vast fortunes acquired in the inland trade have been obtained by a scene of the most tyrannic and oppressive conduct that was ever known in any age or country." (Appendix p. 534. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 41.)

<sup>14</sup> The extract is from the Richard Brinsley Sheridan's speech on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, made in the House on Feb. 7th, 1787, and described as "one of the most memorable in the annals of Parliament" (*Dictionary of National Biography*: article on Sheridan).

The *Parliamentary History* (XXV, 294) records that when he sat down "the whole House—the members, peers, and strangers—involuntarily joined in a tumult of applause, and adopted a mode of expressing their approbation, new and irregular in that House, by loudly and repeatedly clapping their hands."

<sup>15</sup> *View of the Rise of the English Government in Bengal*, p. 70. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> These are the limits given in the Stock Price Columns of the *Court Miscellany* for the month of March, 1769. Of all stocks listed they are easily the highest, the second being Bank Stock, which does not rise above 165 per cent.

<sup>17</sup> India Office Records, quoted in Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*, (1868), p. 21.

The quotations given below regarding the famine of 1770 are from the same source.

<sup>18</sup> Professor Thompson in his *History of India* remarks that the Company's servants between 1760 and 1765 "became a band of brigands." This was in Bengal, but he adds: "Madras was equally dishonest. . . . The scandalous corruption of Madras continued until 1801." These remarks, however, do not refer to the official activities of the Company, as described here, but only to unofficial plunder!

<sup>19</sup> Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings*.

<sup>20</sup> *The Task*, by William Cowper. (1785).

<sup>21</sup> *History of England*, (Chapter XVIII.)

<sup>22</sup> Feb. 27th, 1664.

<sup>23</sup> This trade had grown up in spite of legislation—as, for example, an Act of William III prohibiting the wearing of wrought silks and printed or dyed calicoes from India, Persia, or China, under penalty of a £200 fine.

<sup>24</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Ninth Report of the Select Committee (1783), Appendix, p. 37. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> Ninth Report, p. 64.

<sup>27</sup> Sheridan in his speech on the Impeachment of Hastings mentions those "who affected to ridicule the idea of prosecuting Mr. Hastings . . . by asserting that parliament might be more usefully employed."

<sup>28</sup> Thompson's *History of India* (pp. 54-5): "The criminal's family," writes Thompson, "was broken up and its members sold as slaves."

The inhuman penalties of eighteenth century English law seemed peculiarly barbarous to the Indian mind, especially the death penalty for petty larceny. Macaulay says of Nandakumar's execution for forgery that "it was in the highest degree shocking to all their notions" (*Essay on Warren Hastings*).

<sup>29</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 76.

<sup>31</sup> Dutt, Vol I, pp. 63, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Dutt, Vol I, pp. 70-75.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Francis, who was a member of the Governor's Council at Calcutta, steadily opposed Warren Hastings during his governorship. He was the reputed author of the famous "Junius" letters.

<sup>34</sup> Mill, Vol IV, p. 355.

<sup>35</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 76. Sheridan in the speech quoted above cites Hastings as having said of the British Army in Oudh that "they manifested a rage for rapacity and speculation."

<sup>36</sup> Thompson's *History of India*, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> The same, p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> Mill, Vol III, pp. 246-7.

<sup>39</sup> Of this period in Indian history Macaulay writes in his *Essay on Warren Hastings*: "The business of a servant of the Company was simply to wring out of the natives a hundred or two hundred thousand pounds as speedily as possible, that he might return home before his constitution had suffered from the heat, to marry a peer's daughter, to buy rotten boroughs in Cornwall, and to give balls in St. James's Square." Both aristocrats and radicals consequently disliked these "Nabobs."

<sup>40</sup> Sheridan, in his speech on the impeachment of Hastings, said that "through the whole of his conduct he had alleged the principles of Mahomedanism in mitigation of the severities he had sanctioned; as if he meant to insinuate that there was something in Mahomedanism which rendered it impious for a son not to plunder his mother." This was with reference to the robbery of the Begums of Oudh. A good account of this whole episode will be found in Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings*. Macaulay is severely outspoken regarding the torture of the servants of the Begums and the scandalous connivance of the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, with Hastings.

<sup>41</sup> The rulers of Oudh were theoretically viceroys of the Great Mughal and they used the title of Vizir. In later years they assumed the title of King.

The treaty contained several clauses, but was mainly concerned with an agreement between Hastings and the "Nabob" to plunder the princesses. Sheridan's account of the transactions which followed

is substantiated by Mill (Vol IV, p. 309 *et seq.*) Wilson in his notes to the 5th edition does not dispute the major facts but finds innumerable excuses for the principal actors.

<sup>42</sup> The Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, was a close friend of Hastings who (on an earlier occasion) had done good service by sentencing to death an Indian named Nandakumar. "This Nandakumar was hanged for forgery whilst investigations were actually pending regarding charges which he had brought against Hastings. Professor Thompson in his *History of India* describes his execution as "a scandalous thing on many grounds and of doubtful legality." He adds, however, that "though it was naturally thought that Nandakumar's real offence was his daring to attack the Governor-General, and Hastings' position was enormously strengthened, Hastings himself has never been proved to have had anything to do with the affair." On the same incident Thompson and Garratt (with Clive's forgery in mind), comment that "the offence which had not barred an Englishman's path to a peerage was now to doom a Hindoo to the gallows." (*Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India.*) Macaulay cites a letter of Hastings' written in 1780 in which he refers to Impey as the man "to whose support he was at one time indebted for the safety of his fortune, honour and reputation." This apparently means the timely execution of Nandakumar.

<sup>43</sup> Mr. H. H. Dodwell, in the *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, is at pains to excuse Hastings, but admits that "the Begums were treated with severity, although the degree of this ill-treatment was greatly exaggerated by Hastings' enemies, and in their case (i.e. the plundering of the princesses) the matter was darkened by something like a breach of faith." (p. 594)

<sup>44</sup> The "consideration" for which this bribe was given, says Sheridan, was "no less than the withdrawing from Oude not only all the English gentlemen in official situations, but the whole also of the English army: and that too at the very moment when he himself (Hastings) had stated the whole country of Oude to be in open revolt and rebellion. . . . The Nabob, indeed, considered this as essential to his deliverance, and his observation on the circumstance was curious. 'For though Major Palmer,' said he, 'has not yet asked anything, I observe it is the custom of the English gentlemen constantly to ask for something from me before they go.' This imputation on the English Mr. Hastings was most ready, most rejoiced to countenance as a screen and shelter for his own abandoned profligacy. . . . 'Go,' he said to the English gentlemen, 'go, you oppressive rascals, go from this worthy, unhappy man whom you have plundered. . . . You have taken advantage of his accumulated distresses, but please God he shall in future be at rest, for I have promised him he shall never see the face of an Englishman again.'"

<sup>45</sup> *Court Miscellany*, March, 1769.

<sup>46</sup> Act of George III. (Quoted by Mill, Vol III, p. 337.)

<sup>47</sup> There was, however, a first charge on surplus profits to pay off the contract debts of the Company and reduce the bonded debt to a level of equality with the loans outstanding to the Government. The significance of this will be apparent in the next chapter.

<sup>48</sup> Lines from "Expostulation," by William Cowper. (1782)

<sup>49</sup> Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings*.

## CHAPTER IV

### LANCASHIRE SUCCEEDS JOHN COMPANY

WHILE the proceedings described in the last chapter were typical of Bengal in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the record of the Company's activities in Madras is very similar. This can be gathered from the evidence given before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1782. Dutt quotes from the Ninth Report of this Committee, showing that under the Company's exactions, official and unofficial, both agriculture and internal trade had seriously declined.<sup>1</sup> The chief ally of the Company here was the Nawab of the Karnatic, a puppet with whose aid they waged successful war against the French. War drove the Nawab into debt, the loans being advanced by the Company's servants. This meant increasing extortion of revenue from the Nawab's subjects; and when at length all his efforts failed to meet his creditors' demands, the Nawab handed over the entire revenue collection to the British moneylenders. An unedifying controversy even arose between the Company's servants in Madras and its directors in England as to who had first claim on these spoils.

An expedient was soon resolved upon that satisfied the Company's servants and the Nawab. The neighbouring State of Tanjore, described by the Court of Directors (in a letter dated March 17th, 1769) as "the most fruitful part of the country," was an ally of the British. Nevertheless, in the same letter, the Company's servants were instructed to support the Nawab of the Karnatic in his aggressive designs on this State. Two years later Tanjore saved itself by a payment of £400,000; but this did not preserve it from a second attack in 1773, which placed its revenues at the disposal of the Nawab—for the discharge of his debts.<sup>2</sup> A terrible account of the devastation and

impoverishment that followed, given before the "Committee of Secrecy" in 1782, will be found in Dutt's *Economic History*.<sup>3</sup>

With the huge fortunes they had accumulated in India the Company's servants, as we have already noted, bought up the "Rotten Boroughs" of England and acquired influence in Parliament.<sup>4</sup> Paul Benfield, the most famous of them (who was employed by the Company at Madras), held no less than eight boroughs,<sup>5</sup> and his notoriety was immortalised by Edmund Burke in a terrible onslaught made in the House of Commons.

"Paul Benfield," said Burke, "is the grand parliamentary reformer. What region in the empire, what city, what borough, what county, what tribunal in this kingdom, is not full of his labours? In order to station a steady phalanx for all future reforms, the public-spirited usurer, amidst his charitable toils for the relief of India, did not forget the poor rotten constitution of his native country. For her he did not disdain to stoop to the trade of a wholesale upholsterer for this House, to furnish it, not with the faded tapestry figures of antiquated merit, such as decorate, and may reproach, some other Houses, but with real, solid, living patterns of true modern virtue. Paul Benfield made, reckoning himself, no fewer than eight members of the last Parliament. What copious streams of pure blood must he not have transfused into the veins of the present. . . ."

"For your Minister, this worn-out veteran (Benfield's agent) submitted to enter into the dusty field of the London contest; and you will remember that in the same virtuous cause he submitted to keep a sort of public office or counting-house, where the whole business of the last general election was managed. It was openly managed by the direct agent and attorney of Benfield. It was managed upon Indian principles and for an Indian interest. This was the golden cup of abominations . . . which so many of the people, so many of the nobles of this land, had drained to the very dregs. Do you think that no reckoning was to follow this lewd debauch? That no payment was to be demanded for this riot of public drunkenness and national prostitution?"<sup>6</sup>

The Earl of Chatham was among those who viewed such developments in English political life without enthusiasm. Writing in 1770 he observed that "there has been an influx of wealth into this country which has been attended with many fatal consequences, because it has not been the regular, natural produce of labour and industry. The riches of Asia have been poured in upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury, but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government. Without connections, without any natural interest in the soil, the importers of foreign gold have forced their way into Parliament by such a torrent of private corruption as no hereditary fortune could resist."<sup>7</sup>

This is the protest of aristocracy against the *parvenu*.<sup>8</sup> But the main issue of the struggle that was now beginning in England was not a dispute between the "Nabobs" and the aristocrats. It was the inevitable conflict, which we have already observed, between the interests of the Company and those of the rising industries of Northern England. In this struggle there was ranged upon one side all the influence that money could buy, either in the electoral constituencies of Britain, or in Parliament itself. But on the other side was a force even younger and more virile than that of the merchant princes—the force of the industrial revolution, itself to some extent a product of the first influx of gold from the East.

The annual import of Indian calicoes alone to Great Britain had reached the figure of £160,000 as early as 1677—a considerable amount in those days—and this in spite of a 25 per cent duty under the Tonnage and Poundage Act. Lecky and Macaulay have both recorded the fashion in these goods during the latter half of the seventeenth century, and the outcry of the English merchants.<sup>9</sup> In 1700, as we have noted, an Act was passed prohibiting the importation of printed calicoes from India.

Cloth imports from India, other than printed calicoes, continued, however, to increase; and the opposing tariffs rose in proportion.<sup>10</sup> Between 1797 and 1813 the duty on white calicoes imported into England rose steadily from 18 per cent to 71 per cent, while the duty on muslins and

nankeens rose from 19 per cent to 27 per cent. From the year 1813 the tariffs against India dropped, but by then the British industries were well established, and imports from India were rapidly declining.<sup>11</sup>

It was now the turn of the Indian manufacturers to protect themselves. But here Britain intervened. Indian import duties were reduced to 2½ per cent ad valorem, and the Lancashire trade grew rapidly. At the same time the duties on Indian cloth consumed in India stood in some cases at 17 per cent, according to evidence given before a Select Committee of Parliament in 1843.<sup>12</sup> At the expense of the Indian taxpayer a museum was even instituted in London in which Indian products were offered for the inspection of the English manufacturer, and a report on "The Textile Manufacture and Costumes of India" was brought out by the Government. Of this last enterprise an English officer wrote in the *Pioneer*: "Under force of compulsion the Indian workman had to divulge the manner of his bleaching and other trade secrets to Manchester. . . . This may be political economy, but it is marvellously like something else."<sup>13</sup> An oppressive tax on Indian spinning wheels completed the process of extermination.<sup>14</sup>

The more recent record of the British tariff policy with regard to India will be considered later; but we have already in our survey passed into a new era of Indian history, and must retrace our steps in order to examine the causes and effects of its principal tendencies.

Agitation against the Company's monopoly of the Indian trade had resulted in 1793 in a concession of 3,000 tons of shipping a year to companies in Lancashire and Scotland. This process of throwing open the Indian trade continued until 1833, when the opponents of the Company succeeded in making the renewal of its charter conditional upon its complete abandonment of trade, which was made "free."<sup>15</sup> The Company continued to act as an administrative body until 1858.

As the interests of British capitalists became more and more linked up with Indian affairs, the Parliament which represented them demanded an ever increasing share in the control of India's administration.<sup>16</sup> The inevitable

end of this was the abolition of the Company, since government for profit was now its sole function; and for this the political machinery of the State was better fitted. For another quarter of a century "John Company" continued to administer India at 10 per cent on its capital, dividends having been limited to this percentage in 1833 by the jealousy of other British interests.<sup>17</sup> Then in 1858 the administration passed formally to the Crown. Dividends were paid from the Indian revenues for another sixteen years, until the redemption of the Company's "stock" in 1874, also at the cost of the Indian tax-payer, who at that time was made to purchase his country from the Company for the sum of £12,000,000 in order to present it to the British Government.<sup>18</sup>

The sum was raised by loan and added to the Indian "national" debt, which already included a sum of over £69,000,000 representing the war debts of the East India Company, taken over with the rest of its assets and debits in 1858.

The economic force that was slowly ousting the Company from its position was that of the middle-class manufacturers in Britain, whose use for an empire was very different from that of the interests which predominated in the eighteenth century. Their first demand was for markets, and the European countries which in the early years of the Industrial Revolution had supplied these markets were by 1815 exhausted by the Napoleonic wars. Following the post-war slump on the Continent came the rise of Continental industries in competition with those of Britain; and the manufacturer tended to turn increasingly to the colonial countries for the sale of his goods.

In addition to the problem of markets there was that of raw materials, as England became increasingly an industrial country;<sup>19</sup> whilst for the same reason there was a growing tendency to import the food-stuffs upon which the industrial population lived. The interest of the British manufacturing class in the Indian Empire therefore becomes sharply defined in the nineteenth century: they required an unfettered market for their goods, a supply of cheap food to keep down the cost of living (and therefore of



labour) in their own country, and an actual or potential supply of raw materials for their factories. It was the rise of this class to power and their growing influence in Indian affairs which was responsible for the tariff policy which we have already surveyed.

(The history of Indian ship-building is very similar to that of Indian cloth. We have already noted that an independent Indian shipping industry with a foreign trade of its own ended at about the time when the European adventurers first came to the country.<sup>20</sup> But a ship-building industry had long survived it, and for generations Indian shipyards supplied the Company with the famous "East India Men."<sup>21</sup> Thus in 1670 the Company's factor at Balasore wrote to the Court of Directors in London:<sup>22</sup>

"Many English merchants, and others have their ships and vessels yearly built. Here is the best and well grown timber, in sufficient plenty, the best iron upon the coast; any sort of iron work is here ingeniously performed by the natives, as spikes, bolts, anchors and the like.<sup>23</sup> Very expert master builders there are several here; they build very well and launch with as much discretion as I have seen in any part of the world. They have an excellent way of making shrouds, stays, and any other rigging for the ships."

This industry, however, was also doomed, for we read how "the arrival in the Port of London of Indian produce in Indian-built ships created a sensation among the monopolists which could not have been exceeded if a hostile fleet had appeared in the Thames. The ship-builders of the Port of London took the lead in raising the cry of alarm. . . . An obliging Government saw to it that the Indian industry perished."<sup>24</sup> Under Governmental pressure the Court of Directors forbade the use of Indian ships for the London trade—a blow so fatal in its effects that to this day the vast bulk of India's foreign trade is in the hands of British Companies.<sup>25</sup> The reason given by the East India Company was that—

"The native sailors of India are on their arrival here led into scenes which soon divest them of the respect

and awe they had entertained in India for the European character."

The destruction of Indian industries followed automatically from the economic policies which dominated nineteenth century Britain. There is a speech which is said to have been made by the late Lord Brentford, before his elevation to the peerage, in which his lordship brought out this point very clearly, whilst at the same time displaying a very common ignorance of events prior to the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

"We did not," he said, "conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know that it is said at missionary meetings that we have conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as an outlet for the goods of Great Britain. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we shall hold it."<sup>27</sup>

"I am interested in missionary work in India and have done much work of that kind, but I am not such a hypocrite as to say that we hold India for the Indians. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general, and for Lancashire goods in particular."

Equally expressive is the language of the British historian, H. H. Wilson, who said that the British manufacturer "employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms."<sup>28</sup>

As a result of this policy British exports of manufactured goods increased yearly, while Indian industries decayed. No better example can be cited than that of cotton goods. The export of these goods from Britain to ports East of the Cape of Good Hope (and mainly to India) rose from £156 in 1794 to £108,824 in 1813, and continued to increase throughout the rest of the century.<sup>29</sup>

The consequent dislocation of Indian economic life can only be comprehended in relation to the peculiar balance of Indian village economy. This has always been maintained by a mixture of agriculture and peasant industries, the latter occupation supplementing the scanty income of the peasant during the annual period of four months'

idleness caused by the seasonal droughts. Of these peasant industries, hand-spinning has been historically the principal one, for which the Indian looms maintained a stable demand; and the decline of both weaving and spinning in the Indian villages has left most of the peasants even to the present day without any supplementary industry during four months of enforced unemployment.<sup>30</sup>)

How persistent were the endeavours of the British Government to find Indian markets for British manufactures has been shown by Dutt in his *Economic History of British India*.<sup>31</sup> In 1813 Warren Hastings was asked by a Committee of the House of Lords: "Are you able to speak to the probability of a demand for European commodities by the population of India?" He replied that "The poor of India may be said to have no wants. Their wants are confined to their dwellings, to their food, and to a scanty portion of clothing, all of which they can have from the soil that they tread upon."<sup>32</sup>

Sir John Malcolm was asked the same question about Northern India, and replied that the people there were "not likely to become consumers of European articles, because they do not possess the means to purchase them, even if, from their simple habits of life and attire, they required them."<sup>33</sup>

Others examined by the Committee included Sir Thomas Munro, who gave as a reason against any extension in the sale of British manufactured goods: "the religious and civil habits of the natives, and more than anything else, I am afraid, the excellence of their own manufactures."<sup>34</sup>

To people of determination, however, obstacles are things to be overcome; and we have already seen with what drastic measures the rising industrial forces in Britain were closing their own markets to India and forcing open the Indian market to their goods. "The European," Warren Hastings had stated in evidence, "is quite a different character in India; the name of an Englishman is both his protection and a sanction for offences which he would not dare to commit at home."<sup>35</sup> This was spoken of individuals; but the sanction referred to was enjoyed by the Company as an institution; 1813 marks the date of its

extension on an even broader scale by the final abolition of the Company's trading monopoly.

In the Parliamentary debates of that year "professions of a concern for the inhabitants of India were, it is true, not unsparingly uttered, but it would be difficult to show that the majority of the party who engaged in the discussion were solely instigated by a disinterested regard for the welfare of the Indian subjects of the Crown. . . . The merchants and manufacturers of the United Kingdom avowedly looked only to their own profits."<sup>36</sup> Even while Parliament was hearing the evidence Bombay was stricken by famine.<sup>37</sup> Nearly fifty years later the intimate connection between such famines and the destruction of Indian industries was officially recognised in a government report:

"At the root of much of the poverty of the people of India," says this report, "and of the risks to which they are exposed in seasons of scarcity, lies the unfortunate circumstance that agriculture forms the sole occupation of the masses of the population."<sup>38</sup>

Against this new policy there were the usual ineffective protests. Wordsworth had already observed at the beginning of the century that:

- "If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa  
 • Aught good were destined, thou wouldst stand between.  
 England! All nations in this charge agree."<sup>39</sup>

At least one historian was to share his view where Indian industries were concerned. Referring to the enquiry of 1813 Mr. Wilson writes:

"It was stated in evidence that the cotton and silk goods of India up to the period could be sold for a profit in the British market at a price from 50 per cent to 60 per cent lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70 per cent and 80 per cent on their value or by positive prohibition. Had this not been the case, had not the prohibitory duties and decrees existed, the mills of

Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset, and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacture. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated, would have imposed prohibitive duties upon British goods, and would thus have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation."<sup>40</sup>

In the eighteenth century the weaving industry in Bengal had already received a mortal blow as an independent and indigenous source of wealth. Sir Thomas Munro stated in evidence that the Company's servants had placed weavers under guard until they agreed to supply the Company only. If the weaver was slow with his deliveries, a peon was placed over him to encourage more haste by the use of a rattan cane, and the weaver was fined in order to provide the cost of his invigilator.<sup>41</sup> Evidence was produced that the weavers of whole villages had been held in slavery by the Company in this manner, and the Company's own regulations of 1793 made it clear that such was at least their intention. The new influences which dominated British policy in India during the nineteenth century were now rapidly completing the destruction of an industry which had already, in many parts of the country, been deprived of its independence and had ceased to be a source of wealth to the native population.

Meanwhile India's internal trade was threatened by a system of inland duties that imperilled its very existence. Reference has already been made to duties on Indian cloth sold in India amounting to a tariff far in excess of the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent revenue duty on cloth from Lancashire. Of the inland duties Lord Ellenborough wrote in 1835:

"While the cotton manufactures of England are imported into India on payment of a duty of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, the cotton manufactures of India are subjected to a duty on the raw material of 5 per cent, to a further duty on yarn of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, to an additional duty on the manufactured article of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, and finally to another duty of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent if the cloth should be dyed after the

Rowana (pass) has been taken out for it as white cloth. Thus altogether the cotton goods of India (consumed in India) pay  $17\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. . . .

"The raw hide pays 5 per cent. On being manufactured into leather it pays 5 per cent more; and when the leather is made into boots and shoes, a further duty is imposed of 5 per cent. Thus, in all, there is a duty of 15 per cent (on Indian leather goods used in India).

"In what manner do we continue to treat our own sugar? On being imported into a town it pays 5 per cent in customs, and 5 per cent in town duty, and when manufactured it pays on exportation from the same town 5 per cent more, in all 15 per cent (on Indian sugar used in India).

"No less than 235 separate articles are subjected to Inland Duties. The tariff includes almost everything of personal or domestic use, and its operation, combined with the system of search, is of the most vexatious and offensive character, without materially benefiting the revenue. The power of search, if really exercised by every Custom-house officer, would put a stop to internal trade by the delay it would necessarily occasion. It is not exercised except for the purpose of extortion. . . .

"The effect upon the national morals is yet more serious than the effect upon national wealth. Every merchant, every manufacturer, and every traveller, is, as it were, compelled, for the security of his property or the protection of his personal comfort, and not unfrequently for that of the feelings of the females of his family, to enter into unlawful collusion with the officers of Government. It is a system which demoralises our own people, and which appears to excite the aversion of all the foreign traders of Asia. . . ." <sup>42</sup>

As explained in the previous chapter, these inland duties had existed under the Mohammedan rulers, and in Bengal one of the first concessions obtained by the Company from the native government had been immunity from such taxation. The attempt of the Subahdar, Mir Kasim, to abolish all inland duties (in order to save the Indian merchants from complete ruin by such preferential treatment afforded to the Company and its servants) had

led to his downfall and (within a few years) to the assumption of direct rule by the British.<sup>43</sup> Under their administration the inland duties became far more oppressive than they had been under the Mohammedan rulers, as Sir Charles Trevelyan demonstrated in a report prepared officially by request of the Governor-General.<sup>44</sup> The duties were also made the subject of an attack by Holt Mackenzie, at that time Territorial Secretary, in a memorandum dated June 23rd, 1825.<sup>45</sup>

"Hitherto," wrote Mackenzie, "the attention of the authorities at home, and of the mercantile body generally in England, would appear to have been directed chiefly to the object of finding a market for the manufactures of the United Kingdom. They had consequently looked more to the import than to the export trade of India. The duties prescribed by Regulation IX of 1810 have accordingly taken off a great number of articles sent from England hither; while of the exports, only indigo, cotton, wool and hemp have been made free, and this more with a view, I apprehend, to English than to Indian objects. . . ."<sup>46</sup>

The same authority has recorded, however, the success of the new policy in creating an Indian market for British products. "Judging from Calcutta," he replied (in answer to a question posed by a House of Commons Committee), "there has been, I think, a marked tendency among the natives to indulge in English luxuries; they have well-furnished houses, many wear watches, they are fond of carriages and are understood to drink wines."<sup>47</sup> But while the Indian middle-class in the European settlements could afford to flatter their new masters with such profitable imitation, the condition of the villagers grew steadily worse.

"Have any steps been taken in England or in India," wrote Montgomery Martin in 1838, "to benefit the sufferers by our rapacity and selfishness? None! On the contrary, we have done everything possible to impoverish still further the miserable beings subject to the cruel selfishness of English commerce. . . . Under

the pretence of Free Trade, England has compelled the Hindus to receive the products of the steam looms of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Glasgow, etc., at mere nominal duties, while the hand-wrought manufactures of Bengal and Behar, beautiful in fabric and durable in wear, have had heavy and almost prohibitive duties imposed on their importation to England.”<sup>48</sup>

While the commercial policy of the administration was thus re-orientated in the interests of the new class that was seizing the reins of power in Britain, the Company was steadily extending its domain in India. Instances have already been given of their methods in this respect. In the time of Warren Hastings war was made upon the Rohillas, whose “little territory enjoyed,” writes Macaulay, “the blessings of repose under the guardianship of valour. Agriculture and commerce flourished amongst them.” Their country, however, was coveted by the Nawab of Oudh, who hired from the Company a British army, with the aid of which the Rohillas were subdued, and “the rich province which had tempted the cupidity of Sujah Daula became the most miserable part even of his miserable dominions.”<sup>49</sup> With the annexation of Oudh itself the whole of these territories passed into British hands.

Parts of Mysore were annexed in 1799 after a war with Tipu Sultan. The dominions of this prince were described by a certain Lt.-Colonel Moore in language which pays tribute to their condition.

“When a person, travelling through a strange country, finds it well cultivated, populous with industrious inhabitants, cities well founded, commerce extending, towns increasing, and everything flourishing so as to indicate happiness, he naturally concludes the form of Government congenial to the people. This is a picture of Tippu’s government.”<sup>50</sup>

A curious aspect of the war with Tipu Sultan, which may be noted with some interest, is the use made by the British of their connections with the Turkish Government.



Tipu Sultan was a Mohammedan, and the Sultan of Turkey was the spiritual head of the Mohammedan world.<sup>51</sup> But at the Turkish Court British influence was at that time predominant, and when Tipu Sultan began negotiations with France the British Government appealed to the Sultan of Turkey as the "acknowledged head of the Mohammedan Church." The Turk complied, and Lord Mornington (who is better known by his later title as Marquis Wellesley) forwarded to Tipu the reply received from Constantinople urging him to "consider it with the respectful attention which it demands."

Tipu appears to have complied for a time with the wishes of his spiritual overlord, for he wrote to the Turkish Sultan that "as the French nation are estranged from, and are become the opponents of the Sublime Porte, they may be said to have rendered themselves the enemy of all the followers of the Faith." In a later letter, however, he complained that "English people want to make war on me and have collected arms and munitions for that purpose. I am therefore compelled to declare *Jehad* against them."<sup>52</sup> Such, indeed, was the case. In February, 1799, Lord Mornington, who had assembled an army at Madras, invaded Mysore;<sup>53</sup> and after defeating its forces in two engagements he besieged its capital, where Tipu Sultan died in its defence.

In the same year that Mysore was dismembered Surat was annexed after the death of its *Nawab*, Wellesley forcing the Nawab's brother to retire on a pension, in favour of the Company. A similar fate overtook the Karnatic in 1801. Dalhousie, who became Governor-General in 1848, instituted the practice of annexing the territory of Indian States on the death of the ruling prince wherever there was no direct heir,<sup>54</sup> and by 1857 the British territories amounted to about 800,000 square miles.

The greatest resistance up to the time of the Sikh Wars was offered by the Mahrathas, the great Hindu Confederacy which we noted in a previous chapter as the leading native power in India at the time when the Mughals were crushed by invasion from the North and the armies of Bengal were scattered by the artillery and intrigues of Clive.

Of the Mahratha Confederation Sir John Malcolm<sup>55</sup> said in 1832:

"It has not happened to me ever to see countries better cultivated and more abounding in all the produce of the soil as well as in commercial wealth, than the Southern Mahratha districts. . . . Poona, the capital of the Peshwas, was a very wealthy and thriving commercial town, as there was as much cultivation in the Deccan as it was possible for an arid and unfruitful country to admit. I do not think either commercial or agricultural interests are likely to be improved by our rule. I refer their prosperity to be due . . . to the knowledge and almost devotion of the Hindus to agricultural pursuits; to their better understanding and practice than ours . . . in raising towns and villages to prosperity."<sup>56</sup>

Many years after the conquest of this proud race that came so near to being the instrument of Indian unification,<sup>57</sup> a distinguished English journalist who toured India sneering at most things Indian paused at Poona to pay a tribute of pity to its unborn empire.<sup>58</sup>

"The case of the Mahrathas offers an unhappy and unique combination of everything that can embitter subjection. They were gallant warriors, if wanting stamina; they were also patriots, devotees, and a people of extraordinary acuteness of intellect. The Rohillas, whom we conquered, were as gallant warriors; but they were adventurers, not a nation. The Ghurkhas, from whom we captured provinces, were both gallant and patriotic; but they were careless of religion, while to the straitly Hindu Mahrathas the very existence of British rule is a compulsion to daily impiety. The Sikh is brave, patriotic and religious; but he is simple and unlettered, and easily forgets a beating in the satisfaction of having fought a good fight. The Mahratha, more introspective, hugs the smarts of defeat. The Bengali vaunts as acute a mind—at least until it comes to action—but he has forgotten what it is to be free. Each has his compensation, except the Mahratha. His empire, his nationality, his religion, his beautiful language—we have taken away his all.

"It is not our fault. Some of his complaints are even grotesquely self-destructive. For example, he seizes greedily on English education to fit himself for political and journalistic attacks upon us, and in elaborate Macaulayesque periods complains that the English tongue is killing the Mahrathi. Another of the Brahman's grievances is that he is poor; yet when he gets a Government post that would be great wealth for one, he divides it into pittances for a score of brothers and sisters and uncles and aunts, who all come to live in his house. This is his religion, and it is a most unselfish one; but it is his doing, not ours."<sup>59</sup>

Of those States which remained unconquered many suffered as severely from British financiers as did the others from invasion or annexation. The Nizam of Hyderabad borrowed huge sums in 1821 from British money-lenders, who took interest from his revenue at 25 per cent. His dominions became, in the years that followed

"a great congeries of diseases. Nothing seemed to flourish there except corruption . . . the wretched people were dragooned into submission, and the required payments extorted from them at the bayonet's point or at the sabre's edge."<sup>60</sup>

There remained, however, a few States immune alike from the armies, the influence and the loans of the conquering race. Bishop Heber has provided us with an interesting sketch of Bharatpur in the early years of the nineteenth century, which contrasts favourably with the general condition of the country:

"This country," wrote Heber, "is one of the best cultivated and watered tracts which I have seen in India. . . . The population did not seem great, but the villages were in good condition and repair, and the whole afforded so pleasing a picture of industry and was so much superior to anything I had been led to expect in Rajputana, which I had seen in the Company's territories, that I was led to suppose that either the Raja of Bharatpur was an extreme exemplary and paternal governor or that the system of management adopted in

the British provinces was less favourable to the improvement and happiness of the country than some of the Native States."<sup>61</sup>

The material deterioration of the country was not, however, the only result of this slow absorption of a sub-continent by a Joint Stock Company.<sup>62</sup> An ingrained sense of inferiority in a subject people has in all ages been a principal means of their own subjection; and this sense of inferiority, which is variously explained in terms of the moral turpitude of the conquered or the moral ascendancy of the conqueror, was already at the beginning of the nineteenth century sufficiently noticeable to cause comment from Sir Thomas Munro and other observers.

"Our present system of government," wrote Sir Thomas Munro in 1821, "by excluding all natives from power, and trust, and emolument, is much more efficacious in depressing, than all our law and school-books can do in elevating their character. We are working against our own designs, and we can expect to make no progress while we work with a feeble instrument to improve, and a powerful one to deteriorate. The improvement of the character of a people, and the keeping them, at the same time, in the lowest state of dependence upon foreign rulers, to which they can be reduced by conquest, are matters quite incompatible with each other. There can be no hope of any great zeal for improvement, when the highest acquirements can lead to nothing beyond some petty office, and can confer neither wealth nor honour."<sup>63</sup>

A few years later Munro reflected on the probable condition of Britain if subjected to such a rule as that of which he himself had been an instrument in India:

"Let Britain be subjugated by a foreign Power tomorrow, let the people be excluded from all share in the Government, from public honours, from every office of high trust and emolument, and let them in every situation be considered as unworthy of trust, and all their knowledge and all their literature, sacred and profane, would not save them from becoming in another generation or two, a low-minded, deceitful, and dishonest race."<sup>64</sup>

Munro himself was an advocate of administrative reforms which would have placed vastly increased responsibility in Indian hands, not on a basis of political independence, but of subservience to the interests of the Company, of which Indians would have been the principal agents. He was anticipating by about a hundred years the constitution which is to be imposed in 1937. Sir Henry Strachey was of the same opinion, as shown by his evidence on the subject of the administration of justice:

"It is my opinion that all the judicial functions of Bengal might gradually be thrown into the hands of natives, and that the business would be as well conducted under our regulation by the natives as Europeans; in some respects better, and at one tenth of the expense."<sup>65</sup>

Strachey held that "with respect to integrity and diligence, the natives may be trusted with the administration of justice. I think no superintendence of Europeans necessary." Referring to the existing practice, he said:

"We place the European beyond the reach of temptation; to the native we assign some ministerial office with a poor stipend of twenty to thirty rupees a month: then we pronounce that the Indians are corrupt, and that no race of men but the Company's servants are fit to govern them."

Another witness who gave evidence in the enquiries of 1813 was Colonel Walker, who deposed "that the natives of India may, in respect to integrity, be trusted with the administration of justice; and that some of the civil offices of government may be confided to them with safety and advantage."<sup>66</sup> Other opinions were given to the contrary effect; but the evidence cited above is significant in view of the purely English origin of the testimonies, and the extent both of prejudice and vested interest which must have weighed against Indians in such an enquiry.

The policy of the Company was nevertheless continued on its traditional basis, and was accompanied by that deterioration of national character to which we have already alluded. It is true that the Charter Act of 1833

declared that "no Native of the Indian territories, nor any natural-born subject of His Majesty resident therein, shall, by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any office or employment under the Company." But the power to interpret this very liberal pronouncement remained vested in the discretion of the ruling race, which continued to find every reason other than those of religion, birth, descent or colour for excluding the vast mass of Indians from all positions of major importance in the administration.<sup>67</sup>

The evidence of Munro, Strachey and Walker on Indian character is of all the more interest because of its marked contrast to that of Warren Hastings on the character of Europeans in India. In addition to a very strong pronouncement which has already been cited, Hastings gave important evidence on the subject of the general admission of Europeans into the Indian provinces.<sup>68</sup>

"He expressed it as his opinion, that if Europeans were admitted generally to go into the country, to mix with the inhabitants or form establishments amongst them, the consequence would certainly and inevitably be the ruin of the country: they would insult, plunder and oppress the natives, and no laws enacted from home could prevent them from committing acts of licentiousness of every kind with impunity. A general feeling of — hostility to the Government would be excited; and although the armed force might be of sufficient strength to suppress any overt acts of insurrection, yet the stability of the empire must be endangered by universal discontent. The opinions of Lord Teignmouth, Colonel Malcolm, Colonel Munro, and other distinguished servants of the Company were of a similar tendency, and deprecated strongly the unrestricted admission of Europeans to the interior of the country. Experience had proved, they affirmed, that it was difficult to impress even upon the servants of the Company, whilst in their noviciate, a due regard for the feelings and habits of the people; and Englishmen of classes less under the observation of the superior authorities were notorious for the contempt with which, in their national arrogance and ignorance,

they contemplated the usages and institutions of the natives, and for their frequent disregard of the dictates of humanity and justice in their dealings with the people of India. The natives, although timid and feeble in some places, were not without strength and resolution in others; and instances had occurred where their resentment had proved formidable to their oppressors. It was difficult if not impossible, to afford them protection, for the Englishman was amenable only to the courts of British law established at the Presidencies; and although the local magistrate had the power of sending him thither for trial, yet, to impose upon the native complainants and witnesses the obligation of repairing many hundred miles to obtain redress, was to subject them to delay, fatigue, and expense, which would be more intolerable than the injury they had suffered.<sup>69</sup> There was in fact, therefore, no redress; and the only security that the natives enjoyed was the power vested in the Government of removing a troublesome and mischievous European from the provinces to the Presidency, or even, if necessary, of sending him altogether out of India."

No protest, however, could stem the economic tide of an industrial age. In the nineteenth century Englishmen came in increasing numbers to India as traders, soldiers and civilian officials: and with their advent the crisis which Hastings had foreseen drew nearer to its fulfilment. That crisis was the revolt of 1857, which was to mark the last days of the Company's rule.

Meanwhile the Company continued its conquests. In 1839 the Amirs of Sind were forced beneath its yoke. "In many other respects," says the *Oxford History of India*, "the chiefs were fleeced and treated unfairly, but it is needless to pursue further the unpleasant subject."<sup>70</sup> The East India Company, however, thought otherwise, for it pursued the unpleasant subject to the extent of attacking its vassals in Sind five years later. Sir Charles Napier wrote of this episode: "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be."<sup>71</sup> Henry Lawrence, with less cynicism, observed that "My opinion is that from beginning to end the Ameers have been treated harshly, and most

of them unjustly." According to Colonel Outram, the solemn treaties which the Company had itself forced upon the Amirs "were treated as waste paper, past acts of friendship and kindness towards us in the hour of extremity were disregarded, false charges were heaped upon them, and the ruthless and unrelenting sword of a faithless and merciless ally completed their destruction."<sup>72</sup>

The new conquests of the Company, no less than the administration of their older British territories, helped to produce the mutiny of 1857. For, with the notable exception of the Sikhs, the Company had every native community in the country against them.<sup>73</sup> But fortunately for the Company's interests, the Indians had as yet no leaders apart from their old feudal aristocracy, which inspired almost as little confidence as the power it sought to dethrone.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dutt, Vol I, pp. 100 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> The Company later attempted to retract, and even ordered the restoration of Tanjore after its annexation in 1773. But the money-lenders in Madras (Benfield and his friends) intrigued with the Commander-in-Chief, arrested the Company's Governor (Lord Pigot) and imprisoned him in 1776 till his death a year later. (See *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 585.)

<sup>3</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter II.

<sup>5</sup> H. H. Dodwell, in the *Cambridge Shorter History*, describes Benfield as "an engineer in the Company's service, who in modern times would have made a great name as a financier."

<sup>6</sup> Burke's speech on the Nawab of Arcot's debts. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 114-115.

<sup>7</sup> Chatham Correspondence. Quoted by Lecky in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* and by Leonard Woolf (*After the Deluge*, p. 97).

<sup>8</sup> See Macaulay's *Essay on Clive*, where this aspect of the Parliamentary struggle is clearly outlined.

<sup>9</sup> For Macaulay's observations, see Chapter III.

Lecky in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* tells us how "At the end of the seventeenth century, great quantities of cheap and graceful Indian calicoes, muslins and chintzes, were imported into England." He mentions the Act of 1700 and a similar one of 1721.

<sup>10</sup> The Company's monopoly of the Indian trade had been curtailed in 1793; so that the period of rising tariffs mentioned here corresponds with a time when there was a normal trade as well as the "Investment" system.



<sup>11</sup> The duty on calicoes fell to 67½ per cent in 1824 and by 1832 had reached 10 per cent; but it was still considerably higher than the revenue duty of 2½ per cent imposed on British cloth exported to India.

<sup>12</sup> This refers to inland duties, details of which are given later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> *The Pioneer* (Allahabad), Sept. 7th, 1891.

<sup>14</sup> See the evidence of Francis Brown before the Select Committee of 1848, quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 135. The testimony of this witness, called as an expert on cotton, was extremely damning with regard to other aspects of policy. He said that an Indian appeared to him "a creature born to pay the East India Company" and that the Company's Government had "generally tended to the impoverishment and abasement of the people." He also spoke of the extraordinary decline of irrigation under the Company's rule. (Dutt, Vol II, pp. 136-7.)

<sup>15</sup> As explained later, the trading monopoly was finally abolished in 1813, but the Company continued to trade in competition with rival enterprises until 1833.

<sup>16</sup> From 1832 onwards industrial capitalism gradually displaced landed interest in Parliament.

<sup>17</sup> Dividends had formerly (after 1769) been limited to 12½ per cent. (See previous chapter.)

<sup>18</sup> As explained in the previous chapter, the Act of 1769 aimed at equalising the Company's debts (mainly war loans) by 2 per cent loans to the British Government out of their surplus profits (i.e. after payment of 12½ per cent dividends and £400,000 to the British Exchequer). Thus, when the British Government took over the administration of India they wiped out their own debt to the Company by taking over its outstanding obligations, which will be examined in more detail later. Interest on the Company's debts, however, remained chargeable on the Indian revenues, which now became the property of Great Britain.

<sup>19</sup> Sir John Malcolm, who was at that time Governor of Bombay, noted in a general minute (dated Nov. 30th, 1830), that "In the despatch of the Court it is observed that their attention has been directed in a special manner to this subject, and to look to India for the means of rendering Great Britain independent of foreign countries for a considerable portion of raw material, upon which her most valuable manufactures depend."

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the Navigation Acts, which required the Company's ships to be manned by British seamen, destroyed at the same time all possibility of Indians being employed in British shipping, even when the ships were built in India.

<sup>22</sup> Letter dated Dec. 16th, 1670. Quoted by Mookerji in his *History of Indian Shipping* (page 233). Mookerji quotes evidence that the British borrowed plans and designs from the Indian builders.

<sup>23</sup> Indian ironwork includes some of the oldest specimens that are to be found in the world, as was demonstrated by Mr. Ball in the Geological Survey of India. According to this authority the famous iron pillar at Delhi is at least 1,500 years old, and there are even to-day

comparatively few factories where such a mass of metal could be manufactured. Indeed, till recently it would have been thought impossible.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor's *History of India*, quoted by Mrs. Besant in *India, Bond or Free?* (p. 140). At the end of the Bengal month of *Pous* a maritime festival is still celebrated which commemorates the days of an indigenous merchant traffic; and up to recent years discarded craft built of Indian teak was still trading along the coasts of North-West Europe.

<sup>25</sup> Dutt (Vol II, p. 114) mentions the large ships built at Calcutta in the Seventeen-nineties, but states that by 1840 ship-building at Calcutta had been abandoned.

<sup>26</sup> Joynton Hicks' words are given here as quoted by Mr. Lansbury in the House of Commons. (Hansard, March 11th, 1926.) Considered as an historical analysis this statement is hopelessly inaccurate, since the question of "an outlet for British goods" did not arise until the conquest of India in other interests was well on its way. In spite of this, Lord Brentford's famous words express boldly and accurately the spirit of nineteenth century politics.

<sup>27</sup> At this point someone, says Lansbury, shouted "Shame"; to which Joynton Hicks replied "Call it shame if you like. I am stating facts."

<sup>28</sup> Continuation to Mill's *History of British India*, Vol VII, p. 385.

<sup>29</sup> Dutt (Vol I, p. 251) quotes an interesting table of figures from 1794 to 1813 showing this steady increase. The figures were supplied to an Order of the House of Commons dated May 4th, 1813. This was only the beginning of the vast increases which are recorded later.

<sup>30</sup> Marx in *Capital* (p. 462 in the *Everyman* edition) quotes the Governor-General as saying in 1834: "The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."

<sup>31</sup> Vol I, Chapter XIV.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes of Evidence, 1813, p. 3. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 257-8.

<sup>33</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 258.

Dutt also mentions the evidence of Graeme Mercer, an experienced servant of the Company, who "stated that Lord Wellesley had endeavoured to find markets for such goods by instituting Fairs in Rohilkhand, exhibiting British woollens in those Fairs, and by directing the British Resident to attend the great Fair at Hardwar with the same object."

<sup>34</sup> Munro was a distinguished servant of the Company who held office in India from 1780-1807.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes of Evidence (1813). Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 265. Munro and Lord Teignmouth submitted similar evidence, while Thomas Sydenham went even further and stated that: "Englishmen are more apt than any other nation to commit violence in foreign countries, and this I believe to be the case in India."

<sup>36</sup> H. H. Wilson. Continuation of Mill's *History of British India*, Vol VII, pp. 413-414. Wilson in a footnote quotes a speech made as early as 1806 by Mr. Alderman Prinsep who "speaking of the probable substitution of raw cotton for cotton goods in the ships of private traders, made the remarkable observation that a sufficient supply of the raw

material would accelerate the period which he saw approaching, when the natives of India should be supplied with cloth made in England of their own cotton, leaving to the Mother Country all the profits of freight, agency, commission, insurance and manufacture." (Parl. Debates 14th March, 1806.)

<sup>37</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 257.

<sup>38</sup> Report of Famine Commission (1880).

<sup>39</sup> Sonnet dated October, 1803.

<sup>40</sup> Continuation of Mill's History. Vol VII, p. 385 (footnote). Dutt (Vol I, p. 293) cites the evidence given in the Commons' Reports of 1830-31 in proof of the fact that duties on Indian manufactures even reached 400 per cent in some cases, while the Indian duties stood at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes of Evidence on the Affairs of the East India Company (1813). Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 264. Dutt cites a Mr. Cox who "deposed that 1,500 weavers, not including their families and connections, were under his authority in the factory over which he presided."

<sup>42</sup> Ellenborough became Governor-General in 1842. The letter quoted was written to the Chairman of the Company, and is dated March 18th, 1835. It is cited by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 306-7.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapter III. Of this unfortunate man Thompson and Garratt in their *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule* make the comment that he was "a genuine patriot and an able ruler, who quickly retrenched expenditure and suppressed disorder. But he was to be driven to the edge of insanity, if not over it."

<sup>44</sup> This report was principally responsible for the eventual abolition of the inland duties. Macaulay said of it that he had "never read an abler state paper."

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 304-5.

<sup>46</sup> The articles mentioned were all raw materials required for British manufactures, and the indigo plantations were mostly British-owned.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 290.

<sup>48</sup> *Eastern India* by Montgomery Martin (London 1838).

<sup>49</sup> One of the Company's servants who was posted at Patna in March, 1774 (when the Company's brigade was marching to join the forces of Sujah Daula) wrote that: "Mr. Hastings' settlement . . . doth not meet with the approbation of people in general. It is called hiring the troops to the country Powers." (*Palk Manuscripts*, 1922.) The letter is quoted by a writer in the *Nineteenth Century* of November, 1927, and it is significant that the writer, in an article written to defend the character of Warren Hastings, remarks that: "he must be held to deserve grave reproach for his engagement in the Rohilla War. Lyall's view, that he was singularly blind to the political immorality of our participation in it, has not been disturbed."

<sup>50</sup> Moore's *Narrative of the War with Tipu Sultan* (p. 201).

<sup>51</sup> There were, of course, considerable Moslem sects which did not acknowledge the supremacy of the *Khilafat*, but Tipu as an orthodox Moslem was subject to it in the same sense that a Roman Catholic

would be subject to the Pope. One of Lord Mornington's very illuminating letters will be found, quoted in full, in Mr. Brockway's *Indian Crisis* (pp. 66-7).

<sup>52</sup> *A Review of the Origin, Progress and Result of the Decisive War with the late Tipu Sultan*, by T. Cadell and W. Davis, London, 1800. This correspondence affords an interesting illustration of the strong tie which even to-day unites the Moslem world. The *Khilafat* agitation in India after the Great War is a modern instance of this, the strongest animosity having been excited among Moslems because the British Government had broken its pledges to respect the Holy Places of Islam.

<sup>53</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, pp. 603-4.

<sup>54</sup> According to Indian custom the ruler could adopt an heir; but by 1848 the Company was strong enough to overrule this custom, and the official policy was to lose no opportunity of extending the Company's territories and revenues. (See Statement of 1841, quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 25.)

<sup>55</sup> Other interesting passages in Sir John Malcolm's statement are quoted by Dutt (Vol II, pp. 415-417). The statement was made before a select Committee of the House of Commons, and is given here as quoted in the *Indian Cyclopaedia*, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> A writer in *Young India* (Dec. 5th, 1929) quotes a similar account by Anquetil Duperron: "When I entered the country of the Mahrathas, I thought myself in the midst of simplicity and happiness of the golden age. . . . The people were cheerful, vigorous and in high health, and unbounded hospitality was a universal virtue."

<sup>57</sup> The Mahrathas owed their independence in the early years of the Company's rule largely to the statesmanship of the great minister, Nana Farnavis. He is described by Thompson and Garratt as "a man of strict veracity, humane, frugal and charitable," also as "the greatest Indian statesman of the eighteenth century. . . . Courteously and without giving offence adequate for war, he had put by numerous invitations to walk into the parlour where Nizam, Nawabs of Oudh, Bengal, the Carnatic and several smaller rulers were being entertained." (*Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, pp. 213, 215.)

<sup>58</sup> *In India* by G. W. Steevens (1899), pp. 289-290.

<sup>59</sup> It escaped the observation of Mr. Steevens that the generosity of Marathas in government positions did not account for the poverty of those who were not. Indeed, in so far as it would affect the welfare of the masses at all, it would render their condition more inexplicable.

<sup>60</sup> *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, by Thompson and Garratt. "There is still a Nizam," Macaulay wrote in his *Essay on Clive*, "whose capital is overawed by a British cantonment, and to whom a British Resident gives, under the name of advice, commands which are not to be disputed."

<sup>61</sup> *Heber's Journal*, Vol II, p. 17. See for comparison the Bishop's remarks quoted in Chapter VI.

<sup>62</sup> To this period belongs the first Press Ordinance, of March 14th, 1823, justified on the grounds that "the liberty of the Press is not consistent with the character of our institutions in this country" (W. B. Bayley's Minute: Calcutta Council, October 10th, 1822). One reason given was that an Indian paper had ridiculed the Holy Trinity. The

Ordinance led to the closing-down of one of the first "reform" papers, edited by Ram Mohun Roy.

<sup>63</sup> Letter to Canning. Quoted by Thompson in his *History of India*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>64</sup> Written in 1824 and quoted by Thompson, in his *History of India* (p. 73). Thompson, writing in 1927, comments that "Indians have not been excluded during the last 40 years as completely as the quotation implies, though it is only now that they are getting representatives other than official nominees; and they are not a 'low-minded, deceitful and dishonest race.'"

<sup>65</sup> Evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee in 1813. Quoted by H. H. Wilson. (Mill, Vol VII, p. 280.) The quotations given below from Strachey and Colonel Walker are from the same source.

<sup>66</sup> Colonel Walker, in a letter to the Company, gives a warning against the opinions of European officials on Indian character. He says that "they often undervalue the qualifications of the natives from motives of prejudice or interest." (*East India Papers*, London, 1820. Vol II, p. 188.)

<sup>67</sup> Lord Lytton in a Confidential Minute of 1878 remarked of the Act of 1833 that "No sooner was the Act passed than the Government began to devise means for practically evading the fulfilment of it." This minute was quoted by the First Indian Member of Parliament (Dadabhai Naorogi) in *Poverty and un-British Rule in India* (London, 1901). This was also the view of Hay Cameron (Legal Member of the Governor-General's Council from 1843-8), who told a Committee of the House of Lords in 1853 that not a single Indian had benefitted by this Act. (See Dutt, Vol II, p. 187.)

<sup>68</sup> This account of the evidence taken before the Select Committee of both Houses in 1813 is quoted from Wilson's continuation of Mill's *History*, Vol VII, pp. 375-6.

<sup>69</sup> The additional comment may be made, and will be developed further in the next chapter, that the procedure of the British Courts was unintelligible to all but the educated Indians. Therefore the courts were the last places where a villager would seek redress—even though, like the Ritz Hotel, they were open to all.

<sup>70</sup> This passage is quoted by Thompson in his *History of India* with the remark that "the Amirs of Sind were forced into a subsidiary alliance and their independence made a farce."

<sup>71</sup> Napier was in command of the expedition, which was the occasion of his famous "Peccavi" despatch. His account of it as given here is from his diary, quoted by Thompson in his *History of India*. Thompson mentions that Napier received £70,000 "as private prize-money," as a result of the expedition.

<sup>72</sup> *Conquest of Sindh*, by Lt. Col. Outram, London, 1846.

<sup>73</sup> The Sikhs were so violently opposed to the Moslems who had oppressed them in the past that they sided with the British against the attempt to revive the power of the Mughals. A further account of this will be given in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REVOLT OF 1857

READERS of George Borrow will remember that the hero of *The Romany Rye* in the last chapter of that excellent book meets a recruiting sergeant of the Honourable East India Company. The sergeant invites him to take service in India, "the finest country in the world," albeit peopled by "a set of rascals not worth regarding," who speak a "beastly gibberish." All that the Company's service requires of the young man is "to kick and cut down" these rascals, "and take from them their rupees, which means silver money."

*The Romany Rye* was published in 1857, the fatal year in which the rascals revolted. The Company in its latter years had done all that was consistent with its financial ideals to bring order out of the chaos of its first conquests. It had suppressed all rival organisations that challenged its monopoly of destruction and direct exploitation, including dacoits and *thugs*.<sup>1</sup> Missionary consciences which had remained unmoved by the wars and extortions of the Company itself had been gratified by its abolition of *sati* among the Hindus.<sup>2</sup> At the time when the mutiny broke out among the Indian sepoys, the rule of the Company was already approximating in its technique to the ideals of imperial administration as they came eventually to be expounded by the school of Rhodes, Chamberlain and Kipling.

The last important action of the Company before the Mutiny was the annexation of Oudh, constituting the eighth major annexation under the administration of Dalhousie. "Lord Dalhousie," says Seeley, the great historian of empire, "stands out in history as a ruler of the type of Frederick the Great, and did deeds which are almost as difficult to justify as the seizure of Silesia or the partition

of Poland. But these acts, if crimes, are crimes of the same order as those of Frederick, crimes of ambition."<sup>3</sup> With Dalhousie there began in earnest what Hyndman<sup>4</sup> described as "that course of unscrupulous annexation and wholesale Europeanisation from which our empire is now suffering."<sup>5</sup>

The effects of this policy were exposed by an English writer four years before the Mutiny. In his book *Government of India Under a Bureaucracy*, published in London in 1853, Mr. John Dickinson contrasted the "simple and rational mode of dispensing justice," which India had evolved with the "obscure, complicated, pedantic system of English law" which was replacing it. Few recognised, however, that the new legal system was only part of a new economic force that was uprooting the country; for British law was the law of the landlord and the capitalist.<sup>6</sup>

The annexation of Oudh was announced by proclamation on February 13th, 1856. The contemporary comments of Sir William Sleeman, who was the British Resident at Lucknow from 1840 to 1854, give us some impression of how the matter was viewed from the Indian side:

"The people," he wrote, "or at least a great part of them, would prefer to reside in Oudh . . . rather than in our own districts, under the evils the people are exposed to from the uncertainty of our law, the multiplicity of our courts, the pride and negligence of those who preside over them, and the corruption and insolence of those who must be employed to prosecute or defend a cause in them and enforce the fulfilment of a decree when passed. I am persuaded that if it were put to the vote among the people of Oudh, 99 in 100 would rather remain as they are than have our system introduced in its present complicated state."<sup>7</sup>

The rule of the Kings of Oudh had certainly been oppressive in the past, and all the more so because, as tributaries of the East India Company, they were guaranteed by its powerful military forces against insurrection.<sup>8</sup> But a worse fate lay before them, for the cumbersome legal system to which Sir William Sleeman so forcibly alluded was now applied to the territories of Oudh as well as to the rest of the broad dominions of the Company.

"The first activities of the English judges were terrifying and incomprehensible to every Indian." A simple people, used to laws which a peasant could understand and a village council could interpret, they were completely baffled by "the apparently capricious proceedings of the Supreme Court. It was a new ceremonial, meaningless and of almost religious obscurity."<sup>9</sup> Nor did British law become any less of a mystery or a menace to the poor as the educated classes began to fathom it. According to the authors of the *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule* :

"A new field was opened to the higher caste Hindus, whose subtle minds delighted in the tortuosities of eighteenth century law. The Brahmin had centuries of experience in dominating his fellows by his knowledge of religious rites and by magnifying their importance. Here was a new form of magic, of immense potency."<sup>10</sup>

The legal labyrinth of the eighteenth century had not become much straighter by the year 1857; and even in the present day it is not such a path that the wayfaring man, being a fool, cannot err therein. Even the labours of the Law Commission, which had been at work in the 'thirties under the presidency of Macaulay, had not yet brought forth their grim offspring, for the doubtful blessings of the Indian Penal Code were not experienced until 1862.<sup>11</sup>

It was the rapid advance, by a policy of wholesale annexation, of this terrifying administration, complicated in its judicial system and extortionate in its demands, which converted an army mutiny into a political revolt. Reference has often been made to this revolt as though it had been confined to the *Sepoy* forces, but this was by no means the case. In Oudh, particularly, there was a popular movement in sympathy with the mutineers. "In Jhansi State, which had been annexed by Lord Dalhousie, the Dowager Rani was the life and soul of the insurrection, fought in male attire against the British troops, and died on the field of battle."<sup>12</sup>

The revolt began at Meerut, whence mutiny spread rapidly through the *Sepoy* army in Bengal. It was a hundred years after the fateful battle of Plassey, a fact which



was realised throughout Northern India. That revolution was planned and organised on a very wide scale is proved by subsequent evidence regarding the mysterious *chapatis* which were sent round from village to village before the mutiny, with messages from some unknown centre.<sup>13</sup> On the side of the peasants and plantation workers who rallied to the support of the mutineers there were, however, important deficiencies. The peasants had neither adequate supplies of arms, nor leaders, other than the disgruntled aristocratic elements of a feudal society which had suffered from the Company's depredations.

The story of the greased cartridges, of which so much has been made by many historians, sinks into insignificance when compared with the major issues that were at stake. "The cartridges provided merely the occasion of the mutiny. The real cause lay in popular discontents, reflected in the army."<sup>14</sup> On the side of the Company were the British troops, the Gurkhas and the Sikhs. The Gurkhas were recruited from Nepal, beyond the frontiers of India, and showed all the qualities of foreign mercenaries, being alien both in race and religion to the peoples of India. The position of the Sikhs was curious, for the annexation of their country had been among the recent achievements of Dalhousie, and in most cases the peoples of states recently annexed proved the most spirited in the revolt.

Dalhousie's policy in the Punjab, however, had been far-seeing. The struggle with the Sikhs had been the hardest of all the wars of conquest which had been fought by the Company, and victory had only been obtained by extensive treachery. Of the first Sikh War, Dutt writes that "the commander of the Sikh army, Lal Singh, was a traitor, and probably wished the destruction of the army he led."<sup>15</sup> He fled at the beginning of the first battle, leaving his leaderless troops to face inevitable defeat. The second battle was obstinately contested, but once more the Sikhs were defeated by the same man's treachery. After a third British victory a final engagement was fought in which "Tej Singh, the Sikh commander, fled at the first assault, and is supposed to have broken the bridge over the Sutlej to prevent the escape of his army."<sup>16</sup>

The valour and discipline of the Sikh troops were proved in spite of the conduct of their leaders. It became the policy of the Company to break up the Sikh kingdom, but to treat with moderation a race so formidable, placed geographically where its martial talent could be used for the defence of the frontier.

By the treaty of 1846 the Punjab was therefore reduced to a tributary status. Two years later, however, the Sikhs were in arms again. After two hotly contested actions a third was fought at Chilianwala, which (as Hunter remarks in his *History of India*) "British patriotism prefers to call a drawn battle."<sup>17</sup> In 1849, however, the British secured a decisive victory and annexed the Punjab, in spite of Dalhousie's proclamation at the outset of the second Sikh War that the British army "entered the Lahore territories not as an enemy of the constituted government, but to restore order and obedience."<sup>18</sup>

The work of pacification, however, now began in earnest.

"The militancy of the peasants and their nearness to the frontier had forced the British to compromise, with the result that the power of the zemindars had been broken and the ancient rights of the village communes had been restored. For the same reasons the land taxes had not been raised excessively and the peasant in the Punjab only paid 10 per cent to 15 per cent of his produce in rent instead of half, or even three-quarters, as in other districts."<sup>19</sup>

Such was the position in the Punjab when the mutineers from Meerut hurled themselves upon Delhi and declared their allegiance to the last of the Mughal emperors, in whose name the Company even to that day administered its territories.<sup>20</sup> But action which evoked from its obscurity the shadowy court of the Mughal dynasty was fatal to unity among the potential forces of revolution. The Sikhs remembered only too well their long oppression by the Mughal tyrants, and the Company was fortunate in being able to show a contrast in its treatment of their community. This was perhaps the decisive factor in the war that followed, in which the valour of the Sikhs was used against the forces of national revolt.

In addition to its armies the Company had on its side the advantages of organisation, equipment, and the prestige which accrues to the *de facto* government. The mutineers, with few real leaders, soon tired of the Emperor. "What authority existed lay with a *junta* of Sepoy officers constantly split by jealousy and mistrust."<sup>21</sup> They had, however, enough common agreement to plunder the Delhi bankers in order to raise payment for their soldiery.

Meanwhile mutinies had broken out throughout the scattered Sepoy forces of Northern India. The conflict that followed was characterised by that implacable ferocity which is common to civil and religious wars.<sup>22</sup> Those in revolt knew that they would get no quarter if defeated, and were determined to give none in their efforts to secure a victory. On the other side were men as able, as bigoted and as cruel as Cromwell showed himself to be in his Irish campaign, when race and religion were involved in a very similar way. Of one of these men, John Nicholson, Mr. H. H. Dodwell has significantly remarked that he had "the stern Hebraic piety of a seventeenth century Puritan, and knew that to him the victory would be given."<sup>23</sup> The ideas of such men contrast strangely with the cynicism of their eighteenth century predecessors.

At the outset of the revolt a British force had marched against Delhi. Here it was joined three months later by a force from the Punjab, consisting mainly of British reinforcements and Sikhs. The capital of the Mughals fell to this combined army in September 1857, and from that moment the revolt waned. "A general massacre of the inhabitants of Delhi, a large number of whom were known to wish us success, was openly proclaimed,"<sup>24</sup> and one of the British officers distinguished himself by murdering three sons of the Emperor who had taken refuge among the tombs.<sup>25</sup> The legend "Removed in 1857," which is to be found in many of the ancient buildings of Delhi, bears eloquent testimony to the thoroughness with which both law and order were restored in the city, the counterpart to this melancholy motto being found among the art treasures of our own country, to which much of the loot was removed

At Cawnpore in the meantime the British garrison had been forced to surrender to the mutineers. They were promised a safe-conduct to Allahabad, but the boats which they boarded for the journey were set on fire. Only one boat made its escape, and in this four men only survived. Mr. Dodwell's comment on this episode is interesting and informative:

"Death was the accepted punishment for mutiny. . . . Wholesale execution is the appropriate punishment for wholesale mutiny. . . . The blot on British conduct does not lie in the military punishments which were exacted but in the conduct of a number of officers who took a bloody revenge upon guilty and innocent alike. Indiscriminate executions had accompanied the suppression of the mutinies at Benares and Allahabad. They help to explain the pitiless slaughter of Cawnpore, and both miserably prove how cruel men are made by fear."<sup>26</sup>

A contemporary comment to the same effect is to be found in the letters of Richard Cobden:

"Did you observe," he wrote to John Bright, "that the men who swam ashore at Cawnpore after the boats, in which were the garrison who had been promised a safe passage, had been treacherously sunk, were blown from the guns on successive days, no doubt in imitation of our treatment of the Sepoys? To read the letters of our officers at the commencement of the outbreak, it seemed as if every subaltern had the power to hang or shoot as many natives as he pleased, and they spoke of the work of blood with as much levity as if they were hunting wild animals. The last accounts would lead one to fear that God is not favouring our cause, and that too many of our countrymen are meeting the fate which was intended for the natives."<sup>27</sup>

A general massacre followed of English women and children in Cawnpore, though the mutineers refused to take part in this. They said they were soldiers, not butchers. On July 17th Havelock entered Cawnpore at the head of a British force. "Like Edwardes and Nicholson he was a devout evangelical, constant in prayer, convinced that his

cause was the cause of God as well as of his country."<sup>28</sup> The massacre of Cawnpore was now avenged.<sup>29</sup> All mutineers were executed; but some were treated to the additional refinements of civilised justice, being compelled "if necessary with the lash, to lick the bloodstains from an appropriate place." The official order concluded: "After properly cleaning up his portion the culprit is to be immediately hanged."

Meanwhile in England the power of prayer was strained to its uttermost. Special intercessions were introduced into the Church services of which the following is exemplary:

"Defend, we beseech Thee, our countrymen from the malice and treachery of the sons of violence who have risen up against them; rebuke the madness of the people and stay the hand of the destroyer . . . Direct the counsels of those who rule in this hour of danger. Teach the natives of British India to prize the benefits which Thy good Providence has given them through the supremacy of this Christian land. . . ."<sup>30</sup>

These prayers were answered in a further series of victories. Lucknow was relieved; and though the deposed Rani of Jhansi and her general (Tantia Topi) continued the struggle for a whole year, they were finally defeated in June 1858. The Amazon queen died upon the field of battle, but Tantia Topi survived until his capture and execution in 1859.

The vengeance of the conquerors is remembered in India to this day.<sup>31</sup> "On one occasion some young boys who, seemingly in mere sport, had flaunted rebel colours and gone about beating tomtoms, were tried and sentenced to death." Women and children suffered with the aged and helpless: "they were not deliberately hanged, but burnt to death in their villages." Englishmen boasted that they had "spared no one" and that "peppering away at niggers" was a very pleasant pastime "enjoyed amazingly." Kaye and Malleon estimate that about six thousand Indians were summarily executed during a period of three months, in addition to those killed without the formality of a trial, of whose deaths no statistics are available.<sup>32</sup>

Not for the last time in Indian history the story of the

Black Hole of Calcutta was re-enacted. From the British "Black Hole" only twenty-one prisoners out of sixty-six survived death by suffocation, and these were then shot, together with 216 others. "For this splendid assumption of authority," writes one historian, "Cooper was assailed by the hysterical cries of ignorant humanitarians."<sup>33</sup>

The victory of the government was claimed to be due to "a superiority of moral against a vast preponderance of material force."<sup>34</sup> England had triumphed; and in the words of Swinburne:

"India knelt at her feet and felt her sway  
More fruitful of life than Spring."<sup>35</sup>

All prospect of social revolt collapsed with the defeat of the Sepoy army. "When civil government vanished, the villagers had plundered and sometimes murdered local money-lenders and grain dealers, paying off old scores, and falling cheerfully into anarchy. But when the mutineers were beaten and the district officials reappeared, they were met with the old respect and obedience."<sup>36</sup>

In England there were many who were unsatisfied with the extent of the vengeance which followed the crushing of the revolt. The Governor General was even jeered at as "Clemency Canning" and called a "humanity-pre-tender."<sup>37</sup> But there were others who were profoundly shocked, and their contemporary comments are of interest in understanding the minority opinion in this country. Richard Cobden was not at that time a member of the House of Commons, and in a letter dated October 16th, 1857, he congratulates himself on the fact. "This crisis in the East," he writes, "makes me very grateful for the accident . . . for the more I reflect on it, the less do I feel able to take any part which would harmonize with the views and prejudices of the British public."<sup>38</sup>

Cobden ventured the opinion that "the religious people who now tell us that we must hold India to convert it, ought, I should think, to be convinced by what has passed that sending red coats as well as black to Christianize a people is not the most likely way to insure the blessings of God on our missionary efforts."

"Unfortunately for me I can't even co-operate with those who seek to 'reform' India, for I have no faith in the power of England to govern that country at all permanently; and though I should like to see the Company abolished—because that is a screen between the English nation and a full sight of its awful responsibilities—yet I do not believe in the possibility of the Crown governing India under the control of Parliament. If the House of Commons were to renounce all responsibility for domestic legislation, and give itself exclusively to the task of governing one hundred millions of Asiatics, it would fail. Hindoostan must be ruled by those who live on that side of the globe. Its people will prefer to be ruled badly—*according to our notions*—by its own colour, kith and kin, than to submit to the humiliation of being better governed by a succession of transient intruders from the Antipodes."

Cobden was "dumbfounded at the reflection that after a century of intercourse with us, the natives of India suddenly exhibit themselves greater savages than any of the North American Indians. . . . It is clear that they cannot have been inspired with either love or respect by what they have seen of the English." He saw that Indians must be inspired with "resentment, not unmixed with contempt" for their British rulers, and that it was "impossible that a people can permanently be used for their own obvious and conscious degradation. The entire scheme of our Indian rule is based on the assumption that the natives will be willing instruments of their own humiliation."<sup>39</sup>

In the same letter Cobden tells Bright of some ladies he had met, recently returned from India. They were wives of British officers in Indian (native) regiments, and commonly referred to Indians as "niggers." One had congratulated herself on her broad-mindedness because she allowed an Indian officer to sit down in her presence when he came to her husband for orders. Such things, wrote Cobden, would be bearable if the English in India "displayed exalted virtues and high intellectual powers," but he feared the reverse was the case.<sup>40</sup>

Horried at the "almost indiscriminate slaughter with

which every commissioned officer and his drum-head court are visiting the Sepoys,"<sup>41</sup> Cobden saw no future for India but "undisguised despotism." He feared divine retribution for "the bloody deeds now being enacted," arising "from our own original aggression upon distant and unoffending communities," and he deplored the tone of "our middle-class journals and speakers, calling for the destruction of Delhi and the indiscriminate massacre of prisoners." However, he deemed himself fortunate in having to make no public pronouncement upon the matter, "for I could not do justice to my convictions and possess the confidence of any constituency in the country," and he concludes that he is happy in being left to his pigs and sheep which "are not labouring under any such delusions."<sup>42</sup>

Cobden's Free Trade associates, however, were of a very different mind. "The manufacturers of Yorkshire and Lancashire," he wrote to Colonel Fitzmayer, "look upon India and China as a field of enterprises which can only be kept open to them by force."<sup>43</sup> Their argument was "that unless we occupied India there would be no trade with that country, or that someone else would monopolise it." Protest seemed entirely futile against the consequent "enthusiasm for reconquering and Christianizing India," and Cobden in vain reflected upon the civilisation and commerce of India "before Englishmen took to wearing breeches."

There is a memorable and prophetic passage in this letter to Colonel Fitzmayer which brings us curiously near to the events of the present day. In it Cobden expresses his fear that habits of repression may one day find expression at the expense of the inhabitants of Bolton or Oldham. He visualises the "passionate multitude" facing "the middle classes and the Horse Guards," and foretells that those "who now cry for the destruction of Delhi would not be more merciful to the bricks and mortar of Lancashire."<sup>44</sup>

Others there were who in 1857 took a despondent view of the future, based upon uneasy memories of the past. The words of a previous British administrator in Bengal may have been recalled that "the fundamental principle of the English has been to make the whole Indian nation



subservient, in every possible way, to the interests and benefits of themselves. They have been taxed to the utmost limit; every successive province, as it has fallen into our possession, has been made a field for higher exaction. . . ."<sup>45</sup>

The following year the Bill for the abolition of the ruling power of the East India Company was introduced into the House of Commons by the Government. John Bright, who had always opposed the Company's rule, spoke eloquently in that year of the grievances inherited from the past which it was the duty of the new administration to remove.

"What is it we have to complain of in India? What is it that the people of India, if they spoke by my mouth, have to complain of? They would tell the House that, as a rule, throughout almost all the Presidencies, and throughout those Presidencies most of which have been longest under British rule, the cultivators of the soil, the great body of the population of India, are in a condition of great impoverishment, of great dejection, and of great suffering. I have, on former occasions, quoted to the House the report of a Committee which I obtained ten years ago, upon which sat several members of the Court of Directors; and they all agreed to report as much as I have now stated to the House—the report being confined chiefly to the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. If I were now submitting the case of the population of India, I would say that the taxes of India are more onerous and oppressive than the taxes of any other country in the world. I think I could demonstrate that proposition to the House. I would show that industry is neglected by the Government to a greater extent probably than is the case in any other country in the world which has been for any length of time under what is termed a civilized and Christian Government. I should be able to show from the notes and memoranda of eminent men in India—of the Governor of Bengal, Mr. Halliday, for example—that there is not, and never has been, in any country pretending to be civilised, a condition of things to be compared with that which exists under the police administration of the province of Bengal. With regard to the courts of justice I may say the same thing. I could quote passages from books written in

favour of the Company with all the bias which the strongest friends of the Company can have, in which the writers declare that, precisely in proportion as English courts of justice have extended, have perjury, and all the evils which perjury introduces into the administration of justice, prevailed throughout the Presidencies of India. With regard to public works, if I were speaking for the natives of India, I would state this fact, that in a single English county there are more roads—more travelable roads—than are to be found in the whole of India; and I would say also that the single city of Manchester, in the supply of its inhabitants with the single article of water, has spent a larger sum of money than the East India Company have spent in fourteen years, from 1834 to 1848, in public works of every kind throughout the whole of its vast dominions. I would say that the real activity of the Indian Government has been an activity of conquest and annexation—of conquest and annexation which after a time has led to a fearful catastrophe which has enforced on the House an attention to the question of India, which but for that catastrophe I fear the House would not have given it. . . .”<sup>46</sup>

How much attention Parliament was seriously giving to India we may judge from Cobden’s remark in the same year: “Since I have been in London, I have heard scarcely a word about the best mode of governing the millions of India. The only talk is about the chance of turning out one Ministry and bringing in another.”<sup>47</sup> Cobden saw further than Bright, and drew an ironical contrast between the indignation of his countrymen over despotism in other parts of the world and their horror at their own standards of criticism being applied to themselves. To the great Free Trader this showed a lamentable lack of “the science of self knowledge,” for which the nation must some day pay the price.<sup>48</sup>

Cobden could never bring himself to consider the details of administration because he regarded the situation as hopeless and based on wrong premises. He regarded the British occupation of India as contrary to the laws of nature, which were bound to assert themselves eventually to the discomfiture of the conquerors, “leaving the Hindoos

to the enjoyment of the climate to which their complexion is suited."<sup>49</sup> But this process was to be delayed, for reasons which will become increasingly apparent in the next chapter; and in the meanwhile the lofty aspirations of evangelical imperialism found perfect harmony with commercial interests.

This synthesis was embodied in Herbert Edwardes, who was Commissioner at Peshawar during the Mutiny and "leaned strongly to the view that Providence had placed India in British hands in order that the people might be Christianized";<sup>50</sup> a view which appears to have been shared by Lord Palmerston himself.

"Till India is leavened with Christianity she will be unfit for freedom. When India is leavened with Christianity she will be unfit for anything *less*; and England may then . . . leave the stately daughter she has reared to walk the future with a free imperial step. I firmly believe this is what God meant England to do with India."

Such was the pious hope of Herbert Edwardes, which might also have been called the Last Will and Testament of the East India Company. Their eternal tabernacles received them in 1858 and India became the property of the British Crown.<sup>51</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The *thugs* were an Indian organisation which practised the doctrine of George Borrow's recruiting sergeant upon the rest of society. They were sufficiently in advance of their time to have a religious motive for robbery and murder.

<sup>2</sup> The abolition of *Sati* had long been demanded by a growing section of Hindu opinion. Akbar had taken measures against it (see Chapter I) and the Portuguese Governor of Goa who abolished it in the early sixteenth century was highly honoured in India on this account in spite of his numerous crimes.

<sup>3</sup> Seeley's *Expansion of England*. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *The Bankruptcy of India*, by H. M. Hyndman. (London, 1887.)

<sup>5</sup> This Europeanisation was criticised even earlier, as we have noted, by Munro and others. Even Sir John Strachey remarked that "The Lord Chancellor did not give the native judges too high a character when he said in the House of Lords in 1884 . . . that in respect of

integrity, of learning, knowledge, of the soundness and the satisfactory character of the judgments arrived at, the judgments of the native judges were quite as good as those of the English." (*India*, p. 162.)

<sup>8</sup> "No Mahratha invasion," wrote Macaulay in his Essay on Warren Hastings, "ever spread through the province such dismay as this inroad of English lawyers." This was with reference to the Supreme Court, whose justice, according to Macaulay, was worse than the injustice of former oppressors.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Hyndman in *The Bankruptcy of India*. Sleeman, though opposed to annexation, was in favour of drastic reforms in the administration of Oudh.

<sup>8</sup> Macaulay in his *History of England* (Chapter II) has an interesting digression on this subject, followed by a significant footnote (dated 1857) in which he remarks: "I am happy to say that, since this passage was written, the territories both of the Rajah of Nagpore and of the King of Oudh have been added to the British dominions." He could hardly have chosen a less appropriate moment for self-congratulation.

<sup>9</sup> *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, by Thompson and Garratt. Warren Hastings in 1744 had opposed the introduction of the English judicial system as a cruel injustice to Indians, to whom he asserted that it was unintelligible.

<sup>10</sup> *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*. As an example the authors claim that "During Lake's Laswari campaign, whole populations fled in terror, not from the soldiery, but from the High Court that was believed to be accompanying them." *The Cambridge Shorter History* (p. 638) explains that "the taking of oaths was a thing which the respectable Hindu had never been able to stomach." It cites Frederick Shore's statement, "after long judicial experience" that if a Hindu gave evidence in a British Court it was "presumptive evidence against the respectability of his character."

<sup>11</sup> More will be said of the Penal Code in a later chapter. Macaulay was in the long line of British statesmen who found in the administration of India a cure for their financial difficulties. "No doubt prudential motives," wrote H. H. Milman, "and those of no ungenerous prudence, influenced his determination. By a few years of economy, careful but not illiberal, he might make a provision for his future life." (Milman's biographical note to Macaulay's *History of England*.) He had formerly earned only £200 a year and went to India on account of his father's failure in business.

<sup>12</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 223.

The *Oxford History of India* (p. 722) says that the rising "was not confined to the troops. Discontent and unrest were widely prevalent among the civil population, and in several places the populace rose before the sepoys at those stations mutinied."

<sup>13</sup> *Chapaties* are flat round cakes of unleavened bread. Regarding this story H. H. Dodwell writes in the *Cambridge Shorter History* that "no explanation of this has ever been discovered."

<sup>14</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 738. Disraeli, speaking on July 27th, 1857, said that "he was persuaded that the mutineers of the Bengal army were not so much the avengers of professional grievances as the

exponents of general discontent." (Quoted by Horrabin in his *Short History of the British Empire*.)

<sup>15</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 16. Thompson and Garratt confirm this. "The Sikhs were practically deserted by their commanders, Lal Singh and Tej Singh, who were both in correspondence with the enemy." *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 371.

<sup>17</sup> "The British cavalry, advancing without the support of guns, were forced to a retreat which was soon converted into a flight; the colours of three regiments and four guns were captured by the Sikhs; and a total loss of 89 officers and 2,350 men was the end of a hasty and ill-judged attack." (Dutt, Vol II, p. 22.)

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 23. Dutt points out that Sir Henry Lawrence, who had been British Resident at the Sikh Court since 1846, protested against the annexation.

<sup>19</sup> *British Imperialism in India*, by Joan Beauchamp. *Zemindars* are landlords. The *zemindari* system will be discussed in a later chapter.

<sup>20</sup> This legal fiction was considered to be highly desirable in order to give a constitutional appearance to the Company's activities.

<sup>21</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 743.

<sup>22</sup> From the outset of the revolt mutineers were summarily shot on being captured by Government forces. The rebels, on the other hand, massacred all the Europeans in Delhi and in some other towns.

<sup>23</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History*, p. 748.

<sup>24</sup> *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, by Thompson and Garratt. Montgomery Martin, in his *Rise and Progress of the Indian Mutiny* says that "all the city people found within the walls were bayoneted on the spot." They were "not mutineers, but residents of the city."

<sup>25</sup> This was the celebrated Major Hodson, of Hodson's Horse, one of the heroes of the Mutiny. He captured the three princes and shot them himself. An account of the matter is to be found in *The Life of Hodson*, by L. G. Trotter, who says: "It might have been best, for certain reasons, had the slaughtered princes lived to undergo a regular trial. But Hodson had gleaned from fairly trustworthy sources evidence which convinced him of their guilt." Consequently a trial was not considered necessary, and (as Captain Trotter points out) the murder "was hailed with unquestioning approval by every Englishman in Upper India." Sir R. Montgomery wrote to Hodson saying: "I hope you will bag many more," and General Thomason "often wondered at Hodson never having been made a V.C. for this."

<sup>26</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, pp. 750-751. In the country around Allahabad, writes Mr. Dodwell, "many villages were burnt for harbouring Sepoys," and Major Renaud, who was sent to relieve Cawnpore, "received instructions for the extermination of every mutinous Sepoy he could find." Havelock's advance guard on the march to Cawnpore carried out executions which Sir William Russell described as "indiscriminate to the last degree." Twelve men were executed because their faces were "turned the wrong way" when they were met on the march, and all villages were burnt where Havelock

halted. Sir William points out that these events took place *before* the Cawnpore massacre. (*My Diary in India*, by Sir William Russell.)

<sup>27</sup> Letter to John Bright, dated Aug. 24th, 1857. From John Morley's *Life of Richard Cobden* (1879).

<sup>28</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 752.

<sup>29</sup> Sir William Russell records in *My Diary in India* that "when Neill marched from Allahabad" (to the relief of Cawnpore) "his executions were so numerous and so indiscriminate, that one of the officers attached to his column had to remonstrate with him on the ground that if he depopulated the country he could get no supplies for the men."

<sup>30</sup> "Supplications to the Divine Majesty, imploring His Blessing and Assistance on our Arms for the Restoration of tranquillity in India," (1857). Prayer issued for Morning Service.

The Company's fortunes were not, however, "in one bottom trusted," for they also secured the support of the God of Islam. The British Government obtained a *firman* from the Turkish Sultan (Abdul Majeed) calling upon the Mussalmans of India to make their peace with the English, who were friends of the *Khilafa*.

<sup>31</sup> The quotations given here are from contemporary records published by Kaye and Malleon in their *History of the Mutiny* (Vol II).

Sir William Russell, who was then correspondent of *The Times* in India, has recorded in his diary how women, children and old people were burnt to death in villages by British forces, how Mohammedans were sewn in pig-skins and smeared with pork fat before execution, etc. (*My Diary in India*, by Sir Wm. Russell.)

<sup>32</sup> The work of Col. Malleon and Sir John Kaye is generally considered the standard history of the Mutiny. It is not, however, without a pro-British bias.

<sup>33</sup> Holmes (*History of the Mutiny*) quoted by Joan Beauchamp in *British Imperialism in India*. Cp. footnote on p. 27 re the Moplah Rebellion.

<sup>34</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 756.

<sup>35</sup> "England," an Ode by A. C. Swinburne.

<sup>36</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 756.

<sup>37</sup> See *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 462.

<sup>38</sup> Letter to Mr. Ashworth, published in Morley's *Life of Cobden*, (p. 670, Eleventh Ed.).

<sup>39</sup> Letter to John Bright, August 24th, 1857. (*Life of Cobden*, pp. 672, *et seq.*)

<sup>40</sup> Morley in a footnote to this letter quotes from Lord Elgin's Journals (Aug. 21, 1857): "I have seldom from man or woman since I came to the East heard a sentence which was reconcilable with the hypothesis that Christianity had ever come into the world. Detestation, contempt, ferocity, vengeance, whether Chinamen or Indians be the object." (*Life of Cobden*, p. 674.)

<sup>41</sup> A British officer, Lt. Majendie, (quoted by Thompson in *The Other Side of the Medal*) said that at Lucknow "the unfortunate who fell into the hands of our troops was made short-work of—Sepoy or Oudh villager, it mattered not—no questions were asked; his skin was black, and did not that suffice?"

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Bright, Sept. 22nd, 1857.

<sup>43</sup> Letter of Oct. 18th. The reference to China concerns the efforts of Great Britain to make the Chinese (who had excluded opium from their ports) buy the opium which was grown under Government monopoly in India. The occasion of the most recent aggression had been the seizure of pirates on board a British ship by the Chinese Government. This had led to an ultimatum and unprovoked attack on the Chinese by the British Governor of Hongkong (a well-known Free Trader and member of the Peace Society named Sir John Bowring). The result was the war of 1857, to which further reference will be made in Chapter VII.

<sup>44</sup> "Is it possible," asks Cobden in another letter (to G. Combe, May 16th, 1858) "that we can play the part of despot and butcher there without finding our character deteriorated at home?"

<sup>45</sup> *Notes on Indian Affairs*, by the Hon. F. J. Shore (London 1837).

<sup>46</sup> Bright's speech in the House, June 24th, 1858. Quoted by William Robertson in his *Life and Times of the Rt. Hon. John Bright*.

<sup>47</sup> Letter to G. Combe, May 16th, 1858.

<sup>48</sup> Letter to Mr. Gilpin, March 28th, 1858.

<sup>49</sup> Letter to William Hargreaves, Aug. 4th, 1860. Hundred per cent Cobdenism probably represents the furthest extreme to which the doctrine of *laissez-faire* was ever carried by any practical politician of nineteenth century Liberalism. It was doomed by the renewed struggle for colonial markets which arose inevitably at the end of the century.

<sup>50</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 716. John Lawrence is associated with the same leanings. Palmerston, at a banquet given in honour of Canning when he was appointed Governor-General, said that "perhaps it might be our lot to confer on the countless millions of India a higher and nobler gift than any mere human knowledge."

<sup>51</sup> It was not until 1877 that a British monarch assumed the title of "Empress of India." This was not an administrative act of any importance, but an effort to keep pace with Germany, where an empire had come into existence; for in extravagance of conception Disraeli was not to be outbid by Bismarck. Gladstone, on the other hand, was horrified at this open confession of autocracy. (See Dutt, Vol II, p. 425.)

## CHAPTER VI

### APPLYING THE LANCET

THE "liquidation"—to use a modern expression—of the revolt of 1857 left the British in undisputed mastery of the entire country. Numerous princes indeed remained, but of these an ex-administrator of India wrote many years later:

"It would perhaps be ungenerous to probe too narrowly the dependent position and consequent involuntary action of the feudatory chiefs. They are powerless to protect themselves. . . . Technically independent of the suzerainty of the Empire, they are practically held in complete subjection. Their rank and honours depend on the pleasure of a British Resident at their Court, and on the secret and irresponsible mandates of a Foreign Office at Simla."<sup>1</sup>

With the assumption of direct authority by the Crown in 1858 an era begins of complete despotism such as the Mughals themselves might have envied.

Reference has already been made to the fact that the Crown took over the responsibility of the East India Company's debts in cancellation of the loans made to the British Government by the Company.<sup>2</sup> By this arrangement the British Government became released of its debt, whilst that of the Company remained chargeable to the Indian revenues. The public debt of India continued to increase under the administration of the Crown, and its nature and extent have become matters of a political controversy which it may be useful at this stage to examine. Quite the ablest analysis of this matter is to be found in a well-documented report which was drawn up in 1931 by a Select Committee of the All India National Congress.<sup>3</sup> The whole problem is here examined from the ethical as



well as the judicial standpoint, and with regard both to the legitimacy of certain charges and the manner of expenditure in the case of productive loans.

Shortly after the Crown assumed its responsibilities Sir George Wingate wrote that the Government of India "has been, from the first, simply a department of the British Government." He argued that "the East India Company was simply a convenient screen under cover of which the Ministry was able to make use of the revenues and resources of India." The country, he said, "has been ruled as a conquered country, according to the views of successive British administrations. The Indian debt has really been incurred by the Government of this country; and how, then, can we possibly shake ourselves free of Indian liabilities?"<sup>4</sup>

We have already observed the growing assumption of authority on the part of the British Parliament in its dealings with the Company. Increasingly this took the form, not merely of regulating its internal administration and finances, but of using the vast resources of this mercantile empire as an instrument of foreign policy. Wars were waged by the Company at the command of the Government for interests which concerned neither India nor her merchant rulers, and items of expenditure incurred in such connections were frequently matters of dispute between the Company and the British Treasury. Among such disputed items, which were nevertheless charged to the Company and ultimately to the Indian revenues, were numerous military and naval expeditions to such places as Java and the Moluccas, also stores sent to St. Helena and the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>5</sup>

The liberality of the Company itself in rewarding its officials would have been more praiseworthy if the money of which it disposed had not come from a starving peasantry which, had it been consulted in the matter, might have found more urgent uses for such generous bequests. The Marquis of Cornwallis received a pension of £5,000 a year. Warren Hastings, in addition to his legal expenses and a loan without interest of £50,000, was given £4,000 a year on his retirement. Similar pensions were received by

Wellesley, Hardinge, Dalhousie and others, while the Marquis of Hastings received £60,000 as a lump sum in addition to his wages.<sup>6</sup>

The first major items of expenditure which are to-day queried in India are the debts arising from various external wars, fought beyond the frontiers of India for British interests. Of the first Afghan War, for example, Sir George Wingate wrote:

“Most of our Asiatic Wars with countries beyond the limits of our Empire have been carried on by means of the military and monetary resources of the Government of India, though the objects of those wars were, in some instances, purely British, and in others but remotely connected with the interests of India. They were undertaken by the Government of India in obedience to instructions received from the British Ministries of the time acting through the Presidents of the Board of Control; and for all consequences they have involved, the British Nation is clearly responsible. The Afghan War was one of the most notable of these, and it is now well understood that this war was undertaken by the British Government without consulting the Court of Directors, and in opposition to their views. It was, in fact, a purely British war, but notwithstanding this, and in defiance of a solemn expression of unanimous opinion on the part of the Court of Directors, and of a resolution of the Court of Proprietors of the East India Company that the whole cost of the war should not be thrown upon the Indian finances, the ministry required this to be done. By this injustice, ten millions were added to the debt of India. The late Persian War was proclaimed by the British Ministry in pursuance of a policy with which India had no real concern; but the war not the less, was carried on by the troops and resources of India, and one half only of the total cost was subsequently settled to be borne by the revenues of this country. India, in fact, has been required to furnish men and means for carrying on all our Asiatic Wars, and has never in any instance, been paid a full equivalent for the assistance thus rendered which furnishes irrefragable proof of the one-sided and selfish character of our Indian Policy.”<sup>7</sup>

The cost of this war, however ("an unprovoked war," as Professor Thompson rightly describes it)<sup>8</sup> was placed upon the Indian peasant, involving the country in a dead loss of £15,000,000. In the same year the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Company protested against the assumption that this cost should be allocated uniquely to India:

" . . . It has become the duty of the Court to claim on behalf of India," they wrote in 1842, "to be relieved from any charges to which, upon a fair and impartial view, she may not justly be liable; and whilst it is very far from the Court's desire prematurely to raise any questions regarding the objects of the expeditions beyond the Indus, yet they are constrained to submit that, in no view of the case it can be just or expedient that the whole charge of these operations, including that of the military reinforcements about to be effected, should be thrown on the finances of India."<sup>9</sup>

Other charges incurred by the Company at the command of the Crown included the first two Burmese Wars, estimated at £14,000,000 and various expeditions to China, Persia, etc., amounting to £6,000,000.

The cost of suppressing the revolt of 1857 was forty million pounds. This cost also was charged to India and the allocation was described by Sir George Wingate as "unparalleled meanness"; for (said he) "we have sought to transfer the entire cost of a perilous struggle to uphold our own empire to the overburdened finances of India."<sup>10</sup> Discussing the question in further detail Sir George said:

"In the crisis of the Indian Mutiny, then, and with the Indian finances reduced to an almost desperate condition, Great Britain has not only required India to pay for the whole of the extra regiments sent to that country, from the date of their leaving these shores, but has demanded back the money disbursed on account of these regiments for the last six months of their service in this country, previous to sailing for India. There may be good reasons for the adoption of a course that reminds one of Brennus throwing his sword into the

scale, which determined the ransom of the vanquished Romans; but as we had the services of the men, and as their pay for the period in question was spent in supporting the industrious classes of this Kingdom, and could have been of no benefit to India, we are laid under a moral obligation to explain the principles of justice, or of honest dealing, by which we have been guided in throwing this additional heavy charge upon the overburdened finances of India.

"The cost of transporting British troops to India is also charged upon the Indian revenues; but as this outlay is expended upon the British shipowners and is made for the maintenance of the British authority in India, it would clearly be reasonable and fair that the charge, as in the case of troops sent to any of our other foreign dependencies, should be borne by the British Exchequer."<sup>11</sup>

In 1872 the Secretary of State for India, replying to a letter from the War Office, made a further significant comment upon this particular debt:

"The extraordinary case of the great mutiny of 1857-1858 is the only case which gives even plausibility to the War Office representation; in that case, altogether unprecedented in this history of British India, the Imperial Government was compelled, under the imminent risk of losing its Empire in the East, to make one of those efforts which are at times inseparable from Imperial powers and Imperial obligations. It must be remembered, however, that if similar exertions had been called for by war in any other part of Her Majesty's dominions not only must the same effort have been made, but the burden of it must necessarily have been borne, in greater part, at least, by the Imperial Government; but, in regard to the Indian Mutiny, no part of the cost of suppressing it was allowed to fall on the Imperial Exchequer; the whole of it was or is now being defrayed by the Indian Taxpayer."<sup>12</sup>

The redemption of the Capital Stock of the Company has already been referred to. Twelve million pounds was the sum at which the Company's stock was eventually purchased in 1874, and interest at 10½ per cent on the shares

was paid from the Indian revenues during the sixteen years that intervened between the end of the Company's rule and the purchase of its stock.<sup>13</sup> For this purpose a loan was raised, also chargeable upon India, "and the Indian people are thus virtually paying" dividends to this day on the stock of an extinct Company, in the shape of interest on Debt."<sup>14</sup>

The problem of debt settlements which is raised by any consideration of this subject is, of course, an involved one. If we go back far enough we shall find that inestimable amounts were taken from India in the early years of the Company's conquests.

"The savings of human beings for centuries," wrote Brook Adams, "the English seized and took to London as the Romans had taken the spoils of Greece and Pontus to Italy. What the value of the treasure was no man can estimate, but it must have been millions of pounds—a vast sum in proportion to the stock of precious metals then owned in Europe."<sup>15</sup>

In considering the justice of debts inherited from the East India Company, Indians to-day naturally wish to off-set the huge fortunes extracted from India while these same debts were being incurred.<sup>16</sup> How enormous these fortunes were can be judged from a few individual examples. Clive's annual income was estimated by Sir John Malcolm, who (as Macaulay has pointed out) was anxious to state it as low as possible, at £40,000.<sup>17</sup> Macaulay adds that incomes of this size were as rare at the accession of George III as incomes of £100,000 in his own time; and the value of money has since decreased considerably further. "We may safely affirm," wrote Macaulay, "that no Englishman who started with nothing has ever, in any line of life, created such a fortune at the early age of thirty-four."

Writing in 1836, the same authority estimated that "seventy years ago, less money was brought home from the East than in our time"; though in 1836 this was distributed among a much larger number of individuals.<sup>18</sup> Fortunes such as those of Clive were no longer possible, but a "writer" in the Company could still expect, according

to Macaulay, to amass a fortune of £30,000 and retire at the early age of forty-five.<sup>19</sup> No complete or exact figure will ever be discovered for this continual drain of wealth which began with the conquest of Indian territories;<sup>20</sup> but the question which the Indian nationalist poses to-day is whether India is to continue to pay interest on loans, even if they were productively employed, when these loans were largely balanced, if not vastly exceeded, by sums taken from the country at the same time by methods of extortion.<sup>21</sup>

This problem must be carefully examined in order to understand many present-day problems of Indian finance and politics. The Indian nationalist, as distinct from the Indian socialist, does not base his case upon a repudiation of unearned incomes from interest and dividends. For the sake of argument he is even prepared to set aside his claim that no debts and financial commitments incurred by an alien government without the consent of the people can be binding upon them. He points rather to the actual sums owing, to the purposes for which they were borrowed, and to his own counter-claims, and asks upon what purely commercial grounds India can to-day be called a "debtor country."<sup>22</sup>

The total debt of the East India Company by 1858 was rather over £69,000,000. Against this sum may be set the cost of the first Afghan War, two wars in Burma and expeditions to China, Persia, etc. These wars, all charged to India, were (as we have already noted) conducted in purely British interests, and cost together about £35,000,000. Adding to this the cost of the Mutiny (£40,000,000) and the sums raised to pay off the capital and interest of the East India Company (£37,200,000) we have a total of £112,200,000. Thus, without taking into account those unknown hoards which were extracted unofficially or in the form of salaries, pensions, etc., in the hundred years following the Battle of Plassey, and setting aside the Company's dividends up to 1833, we have a clear balance of over £40,000,000 in favour of India at the time when the Company's government was liquidated.<sup>23</sup>

The problem as posed by the Indian nationalist to-day

may therefore be stated under two heads. Firstly, to what extent can the debt inherited from the East India Company and accumulated since the Company's dissolution be justified as an expenditure incurred on behalf of the people of India and in their demonstrable interests? In the second place the nationalist asks to what extent this debt is balanced (assuming it to be justifiable) by the vast sums extorted from India.<sup>24</sup>

It is often argued that no consideration of financial obligations as between Britain and India can take into account the extortions of the East India Company and its servants, since these are now matters of the past. This argument would carry more weight in India if Indian debts were treated in the same manner. The nationalist contends that if his claims for compensation are to be set aside in this way, it is only reasonable that debts incurred during the same period (and without popular consent) should also be regarded as matters of the remote past for which present-day India can accept no responsibility. The present arrangement, however, whilst wiping out any Indian claim for compensation, enforces the payment of interest on loans; the principle being that Britain keeps what it has got whilst India continues to pay for what it never had. As the Congress Committee's report very logically puts the problem:

"The debt as left by the East India Company is not all subsisting bodily at the present moment, portions having been discharged in the meanwhile. As the aggregate of the Debt incurred by that corporation was in fact charged to India; and as the Debt of India was for a long time in the shape of non-terminable obligations, which are still in existence as part of the Indian Public Debt, there is no reason why the Debt left by the Company, and discharged out of the revenues of India, both as to Principal and Interest, should not be considered by this Committee. The reason is quite simple. Had this Debt not been there, we should have had proportionately smaller obligations to deal with, our resources would to that extent have been better, and altogether our present obligations correspondingly less."<sup>25</sup>

The assumption of direct rule by the Crown in 1858 marks, as we have seen, the culmination of a long process by which the original interests of the Company were superseded by the broader commercial interests which dominated nineteenth century Britain. We have already noticed how these interests successfully controlled the fiscal policy and reduced India to the status of a market for British manufactures and a source of raw materials and foodstuffs. It was not, however, till the Company's rule came to an end that British industrialists were able to make effective progress in the next stage of economic imperialism, which is the development of a colony by means of railways and other means of communication.

"At the time of the Mutiny," writes W. R. Kermack, "there were only 273 miles of railway in India and 4,044 miles of telegraph."<sup>26</sup> This state of affairs was now to be rapidly rectified. British capitalism was already passing beyond the stage where it was solely concerned with finding markets for British goods; for the fortunes made in the early part of the century had now to be re-invested. The internal development of India solved both problems; for while the building of railways gave greater access to the interior and facilitated the sale of our manufactured goods, it also provided a splendid field of investment for British capital.<sup>27</sup> The new communications were at the same time to bring Indian raw materials to the ports; and an increasing drain of food-grains and other products of agriculture was to pay the cost of the new policy.

The history of British railway policy in India is that of probably the largest item in the existing public debt of the country. By 1931 the total capital expenditure by the State on railways stood at nearly £600,000,000. According to Sir John Strachey's *Finance and Public Works of India* the railways built by State enterprise between 1869 and 1881 involved a total outlay of £26,689,000. The rest of the railways were, in the great majority of cases, built by Guaranteed Companies, most of them having since been purchased by the Government.<sup>28</sup>

The nature of the contracts by which these Guaranteed Companies built Indian railways is probably unique in



the history of financial operations. The Company would be guaranteed an interest on its capital by the Indian Government at a rate which was itself excessive when compared with the prevailing market rates.<sup>29</sup> Free land would be granted by the Government, thus obviating the principal difficulty with which the railway speculator usually has to contend. If and when the railway showed a profit, that profit was the property of the Company; but when there was a loss the Company's dividends would be paid from the Indian taxes.<sup>30</sup> Thus with the minimum of cost to themselves, a group of financiers could, without any of the normal risks of speculation, invest their capital with the certainty of a minimum dividend and the hope of a surplus. The people of India, who were their sleeping partners in this astonishing arrangement, were compelled to balance the shareholder's losses and to produce, in addition, substantial dividends for them out of their taxes.

Such a financial arrangement might well prove shocking both to the advocates of private enterprise and to those who favour public ownership, for it combined the disadvantages of both without the benefits of either. Those who condemn public ownership generally urge that it leads to a lack of initiative; but nothing could be more conducive to this result than a system which offered a guaranteed interest to bodies of individual speculators responsible to no-one but themselves. Since interest was promised to them at a fixed percentage upon capital expenditure (no matter how extravagantly spent) they could have no incentive to economy on their own behalf. On the other hand, the absence of public ownership removed from these speculators (if the term may be used for those who take no risks) any necessity for economy in public interest. As to the benefits of the system, the Indian public had neither the advantage of owning the railways for which it paid the losses, nor the satisfaction of knowing that they were run efficiently by those who would have to pay for their own errors. The usual case for private enterprise—that those who take the risk should also take the profit—was, in fact, completely reversed by a procedure which put a premium

upon extravagance and used the resources of the State to finance a private monopoly.

An additional evil arose from the clause, inserted in these railway contracts, that the State might purchase the railway after a certain period of years.<sup>31</sup> Inevitably this caused an artificial inflation of stock prices as the purchase date drew near. According to one authority the wastefulness of the system was officially perceived in the early years of the Crown Government, following the Mutiny.<sup>32</sup> Sir J. P. Grant, President of the Viceroy's Council, objected to the procedure as uneconomic, and the Finance Member of the Council (Mr. Laing) pointed out that the Companies looked exclusively to the Guarantee for their dividends.

In 1884 a Select Committee of Parliament examined a number of witnesses who gave evidence on this subject. Among these witnesses was General Sir Richard Strachey, who said with regard to the Guarantee system:

"Not only has it been productive of wasted money, but it also has created a very valuable property at the expense of the taxpayers of India, which has passed into the hands of third parties without their having incurred, in any sort of way, any risk."<sup>33</sup>

As regards the disproportionate rate of interest paid under the Guarantee, both Sir Richard Strachey and Mr. Westland (afterwards Finance Minister of India) stated that if the Government had built the railways itself it could have borrowed at a cheaper rate. "The probability is," said Sir Richard, "in fact it is almost a certainty, that they could have borrowed the money on better terms than the Company."

At an earlier enquiry a witness stated that "the contracts are a perfect disgrace to whoever drew them up."

"This," said William Thornton, speaking as an expert, "is the necessary result of the way in which they are drawn up . . . the undertakers of the railway, the Company, are deprived of one of the great inducements to economy; they know that whatever blunders they make, those blunders will not prevent their getting full current interest on their expenditure."<sup>34</sup>

Similar evidence was offered by Lt.-Colonel Chesney, who for six years had been auditor of the railway accounts.

"Railways began in India in 1848, when the first staff of engineers were sent out. . . . These gentlemen were sent out to make railways and there was a kind of understanding that they were not to be controlled very closely. . . . Nothing was known of the money expended till the accounts were rendered. . . . It was quite understood that whatever was spent must be eventually passed."<sup>35</sup>

The Right Honourable William Massey, who had been Finance Minister of India under two Governors-General, stated the matter even more bluntly. According to him, "enormous sums were lavished, and the contractors had no motive whatever for economy."

"All the money came from the English capitalist, and so long as he was guaranteed 5 per cent on the revenues of India it was immaterial to him whether the funds that he lent were thrown into the Hooghly or converted into bricks and mortar."<sup>36</sup>

Massey estimated the cost of the East Indian railway at £30,000 per mile and said of it, "It seems to me that they are the most extravagant works that were ever undertaken." Lord Lawrence himself, who as Governor-General had condemned the system, reinforced this expert evidence with the authority of his high office, and told the Parliamentary Committee:

"I think it is notorious in India amongst almost every class that I ever heard talk on the subject, that the railways have been extravagantly made; that they have cost a great deal more than they are worth or ought to have cost.

"With a guarantee of 5 per cent, capitalists will agree to anything; they do not care really very much whether it succeeds or fails; 5 per cent is such a good rate of interest that they are content to get that, and not really look after what is done."<sup>37</sup>

The figures of expenditure prove convincingly the justice of such strictures. The Congress Report gives a table showing the cost per mile of twenty-five different railways, compiled from figures supplied to the Select Committee of 1884. This table shows that, as between the same types of railways (that is to say, railways of the same gauge and traversing the same type of country) those constructed by the State cost half the amount that was spent under the Guarantee system.<sup>38</sup> Even Sir Juland Danvers, who for several years had held the post of Government Director of Railways in India, and was not himself hostile to the Guarantee System, admitted that

“the cost of lines now constructed” (that is to say, by the State) “has been much less than the average cost of these railways, which form the original main system. Instead of £18,000 and £20,000 per mile we now see lines constructed on the five feet six inches gauge for £4,000, £5,000 and £9,000.”<sup>39</sup>

As to the conditions which obtained in the construction and management of these lines, the evidence of Lord Lawrence is once more conclusive. In 1873 he told the Parliamentary Committee:

“The natives in my time (and I see little difference to this day in spite of all the attempts of the Directors of the Companies to improve the system) greatly complained of their treatment on the railways; and I myself believe that though it is difficult to prevent abuse of power under such circumstances, yet the Government would be more effective in that respect than the Companies. . . . On enquiry that I used to make in India, both official and private, I was confirmed in the view that these statements of the natives were to a considerable extent true.”<sup>40</sup>

That any policy could have been so long continued, though condemned upon such high authority and by its own manifest results, is something that can only be explained by the system of government under which India was living. For over and above the authority of a British Governor-General, armed with all the powers of the Great

Mughal, was the authority of a British Parliament, distant and remote, concerned with the demands of a nascent industrial oligarchy and determined to press those demands to the utmost limits. This was clearly seen by Henry Fawcett, whose name is to this day remembered in India among the friends of the Indian people. Fawcett served on the Parliamentary Committee of 1873, and in his questions to witnesses drew from them the admission that even the Indian Government could not rectify such evils as it recognised and was willing to combat, because of the vested interests which controlled British political life.

"Do you think," Fawcett asked Lord Lawrence, "considering that India is scarcely represented at all in this House . . . and that the commercial classes of England are powerfully represented in it, that any Government would, for one moment, be likely to resist an opposition, brought to bear on them from people who have votes . . . ?" "I think not," was the reply of the ex-Governor-General, which he amplified later by defining the limitations of the powers exercised by the Council of the Secretary of State for India:

"I think the Council did act in many cases as a very considerable buffer between the people pressing on expenditure in India and the Secretary of State, and in many ways helped the Secretary of State to resist that pressure; but when it came to a very important matter, in which the interests and the feelings of merchants in England were enlisted, then I think the Council could not resist with any effect."<sup>41</sup>

Fawcett in vain pointed out that the Secretary's Council was supposed to represent Indian interests and that its members were paid from the Indian revenues for this very purpose. The fiction of an Indian Government ruling the country for the good of its people was shattered in one sentence by the reply which he received from General Strachey: "There is no doubt that that is the unfortunate result of having a Despotism Government, managed in the sort of way that the Government of India is; and, for myself, I do not exactly see that there is any remedy for it."<sup>42</sup>

The loss on the Indian railways is incalculable. Payments of deficit in guaranteed interest alone account for about £40,000,000, and this figure does not take into account the value of free land given to the Guaranteed Companies or the loss incurred by wasteful methods of construction.<sup>43</sup> This burden, however, was only one of many which were heaped on the Indian Exchequer during the nineteenth century, and more particularly during the years of "development" which followed the assumption of direct control by the Crown. The nature and cost of wars during this period will be examined in the next chapter, but some mention may be made here of the findings of the Welby Commission with regard to some of the smaller items of expenditure that were debited in the past to India.

The Welby Commission,<sup>44</sup> which published its report in 1900, examined a number of the incidental items of Indian State expenditure; and many of these, though not large in themselves, are indicative of the peculiar morality which has been applied to the finances of that country. In some cases, such as the maintenance of Aden, the Persian Mission, and the Consular Establishments in China, the report of the Welby Commission resulted in the reduction or abolition of Indian payments; though in no case was there any refund for payments which were thus admitted to have been unjust or excessive. The case of the Red Sea and India Telegraph Company is perhaps one of the most astonishing instances recorded in the findings of the Commission, and it may be taken as typical of the waste which has characterised Indian administration from the first Guaranteed Railways to the Bombay Development Scheme, by which some £11,000,000 were recently thrown into the Indian Ocean.<sup>45</sup>

The Red Sea and India Telegraph Company was formed in 1858, with a guaranteed return of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on its capital for a term of fifty years. The Company transmitted messages for a few days, after which the line broke down. The rest of the story may be told as recorded in the Report of the Welby Commission:

"In 1861 an act was passed declaring that the guarantee was not conditional upon the telegraph being in working

order. By a further Act of 1862, the line having ceased to transmit messages was transferred to a new company; and the guarantee of the old company was converted into an annuity of thirty-six thousand pounds for 46 years."<sup>46</sup>

(The Indian taxpayer provided half this pension, which was paid annually till 1908 to keep the shareholders from starving. A final point worth mentioning among these smaller, but very typical items, is that of the Ecclesiastical charges. Though not large in itself, the sum of £200,000 per annum which is still paid from the Indian revenues to finance the Christian Church is perhaps in some ways the most scandalous of all the impositions which could be placed upon a population of which the overwhelming majority is non-Christian.<sup>47</sup> Even the small Christian minority which has existed in and around Travancore since apostolic times derives no benefit from a contribution to the state church of the alien rulers which these Syrian Christians regard as heretical. The seven million pounds which has been contributed under this head during the past thirty-five years is simply a tribute from the native people of India to the principal religious institution of their conquerors.

Instances such as these, which can be multiplied almost indefinitely, will make it clear that the direct exploitation of India did not by any means come to an end with the Company's rule. On the contrary, whilst other and more indirect methods were devised to extort wealth from the country, the Government itself remained, as in the time of the Company, a means of filling English pockets with Indian money. Nothing less, indeed, could be expected of a system of administration which fulfilled the prophecy of John Stuart Mill by maintaining "the most complete despotism that could possibly exist."<sup>48</sup>

To many this must have been a source of great satisfaction. Even the rapid growth of the National Debt after 1858 meant secure and substantial interest for thousands of bondholders. There was also the political aspect of the debt; for (as Horace Wilson pointed out nearly a hundred years ago) "the inconveniences which it occasions are fully compensated by the connection which it maintains

between the Government and the fundholders, a large proportion of whom are natives of the country, and who are thus interested in the stability of the ruling power."<sup>49</sup>

Thus the Indian capitalist was already, even in the days of the Company, drawn into the orbit of imperialism, and efforts were being made to interweave his interests with those of the ruling race in such a way as to ensure his support against revolution. And meanwhile a growing tribute from India to Britain told of an ever increasing number of individuals in this country whose wealth depended upon the taxation of Indian peasants. The total amount of the "Home Charges," including pensions, upkeep of the India Office, military stores and "capitation charges," etc., plus interest on the sterling debt, averaged £16,000,000 per annum during the last ten years of Queen Victoria's reign.<sup>50</sup> Sir George Wingate may once more be cited with regard to one of these charges, which became an increasing burden to India during the years which followed the period to which he refers:

"It would appear that when extra regiments are despatched to India, as happened during the late disturbances there, the pay of such troops *for six months previous to sailing* is charged against the Indian revenues and recovered as a debt due by the Government of India to the British Army Pay Office. In the crisis of the Indian Mutiny, and when Indian finances were reduced to an almost desperate condition, Great Britain not only required India to pay for the whole of the extra regiments sent to that country from the day of their leaving these shores, but has demanded back the money disbursed on account of these regiments for the last six months' service in this country previous to sailing for India."<sup>51</sup>

This annual drain of sixteen million sterling constituted one-fourth of the total revenue of India;<sup>52</sup> and R. C. Dutt, writing in 1903, was able to point out that it involved a regular and growing tribute from a nation having an average income of £2 a head to a nation where the average income was £42 a head. Nor was this the whole of the contribution made; for in addition to the charges included



in this sixteen million there were the savings of British officials from salaries grotesquely disproportionate to the average national income of India. How great the total was or how great it is to-day it would be difficult to estimate exactly; but it was calculated by Mr. J. M. Maclean, M.P., in 1873 to be at least £20,000,000 a year.<sup>53</sup>

As early as 1838 Montgomery Martin had expressed his fears with regard to the much smaller tribute exacted by the East India Company. "I do not think it possible," he had written, "for human ingenuity to avert entirely the evil effects of a continued drain."<sup>54</sup> The Hon. F. J. Shore had equally clearly shown that this tribute had only been made possible by the fact that "every successive province, as it has fallen into our possession, has been made a field for higher exaction." He had stated with all the authority of his administrative experience that "the halcyon days of India are over; she has been drained of a large proportion of the wealth she once possessed; and her energies have been cramped by a sordid system of misrule to which the interests of millions have been sacrificed for the benefit of a few."<sup>55</sup>

But neither Shore nor Montgomery Martin had seen the full extent to which the rapacity of the conqueror could go, nor could anyone have guessed how far the new régime was to surpass even the zeal of a Chartered Company in its eagerness for profits. Year by year the peasant had to meet an ever growing demand upon his scanty income, till even a Conservative Secretary of State for India immortalised an ugly metaphor in describing the process. "The injury," said Lord Salisbury, speaking of the impoverishment of the peasants by taxation, "is exaggerated in the case of India, where so much of the revenue is exported without a direct equivalent. *As India must be bled, the lancet should be directed to the parts where the blood is congested, or at least sufficient, not to those which are already enfeebled from want of it.*"<sup>56</sup>

Famine was the only possible result of such a policy. Famine is not merely a question of shortage, but of the inability to save or purchase; and it was his inability to meet the ravages of local or temporary shortages which

was the increasing menace to the Indian villager throughout the nineteenth century. During the whole period from 1600, when the Company first came to India, till the wars of Clive and Dupleix for supremacy, the records of poverty and famine show that both were strictly limited in extent. The self-governing village communities provided against such dangers, nor were the exactions of the Mughals and their viceroys so great as to deprive the peasant of the necessary surplus for that provision.<sup>57</sup>

But with the extortion of revenue that began with Clive and Hastings there opens an age of growing poverty, reflected in the greater ravages of each successive shortage that afflicted the country. When John Sullivan was questioned in 1853 as an ex-member of the Madras Council he was asked whether the Indian people "had traditions among them which told them that the economic condition of the country was better in former times under their native rulers than it was then."

"I think," he replied, "generally speaking history tells us that it was; they have been in a state of the greatest prosperity from the earliest times, as far as history tells us."

Sullivan was then asked how he accounted for this and for the ability of the Indian peoples in former times "to lay out the money which they did in canals and irrigation and tanks." To this question he replied significantly:

"We have an expensive element which they were free from, which is the European element, civil and military, which swallows up so much of the revenue."<sup>58</sup>

The vast increase after 1858 of the evils which had been deplored by the Hon. F. J. Shore and Montgomery Martin, by Sullivan and Sir George Wingate, led to a rapid deterioration of a situation which had already been serious. Famine, as John Bright reminded the House of Commons, proved a more terrible scourge to India than war was proving to Europe.<sup>59</sup> In 1887 H. M. Hyndman wrote in the preface to his *Bankruptcy of India* :

"I am firmly convinced that in India we are working up to a hideous economical catastrophe, beside which the great Irish Famine of 1847 will seem mere child's play. What is more, I believe no unprejudiced man can read through the official evidence summarised in this volume without coming to the same conclusion."

"Even as we look on," said Hyndman, "India is becoming feebler and feebler. The very life-blood of a great multitude under our rule is slowly, yet ever faster, ebbing away."<sup>60</sup> How truly he had interpreted the signs was seen in the terrible famine of 1897 to 1900, the worst in the whole history of India, which lasted three years and devastated the entire country.

It is on record that during the first, and probably the worst, year of this famine £17,000,000 of land revenue were collected—that is to say, the normal quota—and that the drain to England was partly met, as usual, by the export of food grains to the value of £10,000,000 from a country where millions were literally dying of hunger.<sup>61</sup> Left without even sufficient grain for their next year's harvest, the wretched peasants were unable for three successive years to recover from this calamity. "Miles of cultivated land became waste," writes Dutt, "Jungle grew on homesteads, wheat land and rice lands. The Land Revenue demand of the Government could no longer be collected."<sup>62</sup>

Necessity therefore compelled a temporary relaxation in the exactions of the Government, which gave a breathing space for recovery. But in the final quarter of the century, at least fifteen million people are estimated to have died of famine, most of them during those last three years.<sup>63</sup> A population equivalent to half what was at that time the population of England had perished of starvation, within the course of a single generation.

There could be no more fitting conclusion to this chapter than the words of Bishop Heber, whose praise for the administration and general prosperity in one of the Indian native states has already been cited. Once more we are reading the words of a writer of the early part of the century; but it must be remembered that after 1858

criticism of British administration became more difficult and more rare, for reasons which we shall consider later. Bishop Heber's words refer to a system which continued in all its principal aspects to be the administrative system of India; and those who have followed the instances we have selected will recognise the symptoms which alarmed the Bishop and the results which he feared.<sup>64</sup>

Bishop Heber toured the country extensively during three years from 1824 to 1826. He inquired carefully into social conditions and was gravely disturbed by the heavy land-tax which then, as in later years, was the main source of supply for the growing tribute to England. In a letter written in 1826 Heber tells how "half the gross produce of the soil is demanded by the Government," and comments that such a rate of taxation (which still obtains throughout the greater part of British India) "keeps the people, even in favourable years, in a state of abject penury."<sup>65</sup> He finds such excessive taxation, employed for a tribute to a foreign country, with no return to the cultivator, "an effective bar to anything like improvement," and notes that the tardy remissions made in times of scarcity "do not prevent men, women and children dying in the streets in droves, and the roads being strewn with carcasses."<sup>66</sup> Travelling in Northern India, Bishop Heber found:

"a general feeling among the King's officers . . . that the peasantry in the Company's Provinces are, on the whole, worse off, poorer, and more dispirited, than the subjects of the Native Princes; and here in Madras, where the soil is, generally speaking, poor, the difference is said to be still more marked. The fact is, no Native Prince demands the rent which we do, and making every allowance for the superior regularity of our system, etc., I met with very few men who will not, in confidence, own their belief that the people are over-taxed, and that the country is in a gradual state of impoverishment. The Collectors do not like to make this avowal officially. Indeed, now and then a very able Collector succeeds in lowering the rate to the people, while by diligence he increases it to the State. But, in general, all gloomy pictures are avoided by them as reflecting on themselves, and drawing on them censure from the Secretaries at Madras or Calcutta, while these, in their turn, plead

the earnestness with which the Directors at home press for more money."

Evidence has already been cited, and more will be forthcoming in subsequent chapters, to show that these conditions continued to deteriorate throughout the nineteenth century because the causes of exploitation, so far from being removed, accumulated with the growth of new capitalist interests. But the contrast which Heber made between the provinces of British India and the condition of the Native States gradually ceased to be a real one as the princes became increasingly the instruments of British policy. Placed beyond the fear of insurrection by the powerful guarantees of the paramount Government of India, these pensioners of empire became during the years which followed the Mutiny mere echoes of their master's voice; and with a few isolated exceptions their rule has been no less disastrous than that of the British bureaucracy.<sup>67</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Cotton in *New India*. The position of the Indian Princes will be dealt with in a later chapter.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter IV.

<sup>3</sup> *Report on the Financial Obligations between Great Britain and India*. (Bombay, 1931.)

<sup>4</sup> *Our Financial Relations with India*, by Major Wingate (pp. 23-24), London, 1859. Wingate had seen long service as an administrator in the Bombay Presidency.

<sup>5</sup> Details and figures are given in a Parliamentary Report of 1831.

<sup>6</sup> Lord Hastings was actually bankrupt at the time of his Governor-Generalship, and was accompanied by an official Assignee to receive and administer his princely salary.

<sup>7</sup> *Our Financial Relations with India*, pp. 17-19. Quoted in the Congress Report, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> *History of India*, p. 66. He also refers to this war as a "dishonourable episode."

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Lord Fitzgerald, dated April 6th, 1842. Quoted in the Congress Report, p. 12. The court referred to is, of course, the Court of Directors of the Company. John Bright, speaking on the same subject in the House of Commons (Aug. 1st, 1859) was equally emphatic. "Last year," he said, "I referred to the enormous expense of the Afghan War, the whole of which ought to have been thrown on the taxation of the people of England, because it was a war commanded by the

English cabinet for objects supposed to be English." (Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 217.)

<sup>10</sup> *Our Financial Relations with India*, p. 13. Quoted in the Congress Report, p. 15. "The selfish traditions of our Indian policy prevailed" is Major Wingate's summary of the transaction.

<sup>11</sup> *Our Financial Relations with India*, pp. 15-16. Quoted in the Congress Report p. 15. John Bright is once more found urging the same point. Speaking in March, 1859, he said: "I think that the forty million pounds, which the revolt has cost, is a grievous burden to place upon the people of India. It has come from the mismanagement of Parliament and the people of England. If every man had what was just, no doubt those forty million pounds would have had to be paid out of the taxes levied on the people of this country." (Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 219.)

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Aug. 8th, 1872, published in the report of the Indian Expenditure Commission of 1895 (Vol II, p. 292). Quoted in the Congress Report, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> See Chap. IV. The total figures involved were

Dividend 1833-58:	£15,120,000
Dividend 1858-74:	£10,080,000
Capital Stock Redemption:	£12,000,000
Total:	£37,200,000

<sup>14</sup> Dutt, Vol I, p. 399.

<sup>15</sup> *Law of Civilisation and Decay*, by Brook Adams.

<sup>16</sup> Some figures in this connection have already been cited. A further example is that of Lord Cornwallis, who received when Governor-General the sum of £47,000 as prize money after the war with Mysore in addition to the pension referred to above.

<sup>17</sup> Figure quoted by Macaulay in his *Essay on Clive*, from *The Life of Robert Lord Clive*, by Major-General Sir John Malcolm, K.C.B.

<sup>18</sup> Macaulay: *Essay on Clive*. Macaulay himself repaired his fortunes in India. He drew £15,000 a year by holding two jobs, and wrote to his sister that he proposed to "live in splendour" on £5,000 a year "and return to England at only thirty-nine years of age, in full vigour of life, with a fortune of thirty thousand pounds." He regarded India mainly as a place where he could fill his pockets. See Note to Chap. V.

<sup>19</sup> A "writer" would be merely a clerk, so that the £30,000 estimate assumes no capital expenditure.

<sup>20</sup> Sir George Wingate estimated the "drain" from India at £100,000,000 from 1800-1858, without calculating interest.

<sup>21</sup> The term "extortion" is here used to cover all sums which were taken from India (as dividends, salaries, etc.), without the consent of the Indian people and in excess of any services rendered.

<sup>22</sup> The argument is also not infrequently heard that (inasmuch as the British claim to be "trustees" in their government of India) it is immoral if not illegal for a "trustee" to have administered the estate of his "ward" in such a way as to have placed the "ward" heavily in debt to himself.

<sup>23</sup> i.e. by subtracting the debt of £69,000,000 from the sum of £112,200,000 wrongly debited to India during these years.

<sup>24</sup> The actual sums involved in the early period are not, of course, large as compared with the debts of many European countries in recent years. But they must be considered in relation to the extreme poverty of India and the value of money at the time. Nor does their size affect the justice or injustice of their allocation. The Indian insistence on this subject may be compared with the inability of Ireland to forget Cromwell. To Englishmen the campaigns of Cromwell in Ireland are a forgotten episode. To Irishmen they are a permanent injury from which the country is still suffering and for which it is still paying.

<sup>25</sup> Congress Report, Vol II, p. 33 (footnote).

<sup>26</sup> *The Expansion of Britain*, by W. R. Kermack.

<sup>27</sup> This was the beginning of a process which was to lead ultimately (as we shall see) to the development of Indian industries by British capital, thus completing the circle that began with their destruction. But the early British investments in India (being confined to plantations, railways, irrigation works, etc.) did not interfere in any way with the older policy. On the contrary, they were an essential part of it. As Dutt points out (Vol, II, p. 174) "the administration both of the East India Company and the Crown was subject to a continuous Parliamentary pressure to extend and multiply railways in India, even at a loss to the revenues of the country."

<sup>28</sup> Indian figures are generally given in *crores* of rupees. A *crore* is ten million, and for calculation at the present rate of exchange the rupee should be valued at 1s. 6d. to reduce rupee figures to sterling. Capital expenditure by the State on Indian railways totalled Rs. 745.29 *crores* by the year 1931. In addition there were Rs. 33.20 *crores* in the form of capital supplied by the Guaranteed Companies, to which several lines were leased for working after their acquisition by the State. Any exact calculation of these sums in sterling is difficult, as the value of the rupee has varied between 1s. 4d. and 2s.

<sup>29</sup> The guaranteed minimum interest in the case of the original companies was from 4½ per cent to 5 per cent. This was at a time when 4 per cent was paid on the greater part of the East India Company's debt in the Bengal Presidency, according to a statement submitted by the Company in 1856 and printed by order of the House of Commons.

<sup>30</sup> There was, of course, a first charge upon the profits to discharge the guaranteed interest paid by the Government. Surplus profits, though originally enjoyed *exclusively* by shareholders, were later on divided equally between the Companies and the Government.

<sup>31</sup> This option was given the Government after twenty-five years or after fifty years, the value of stock to be calculated according to its average price during the three years immediately previous to the date of purchase.

<sup>32</sup> H. Ball, *Railway Policy in India*.

<sup>33</sup> Answer to Question 19, Select Committee of 1884. Quoted by Congress Report Vol I, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> Parliamentary Committee of 1872. Evidence of William Thornton, quoted by Dutt, Vol II, pp. 354-355.

<sup>35</sup> Report of 1872. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 355.

<sup>36</sup> Report of 1872. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 356.

<sup>37</sup> Report of 1873. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 356. In an earlier statement (quoted in a despatch by Lord Mayo, dated March 11th, 1869), Lord Lawrence said that "the history of the actual operations of Railway Companies in India gives illustrations of management as bad and extravagant as anything that the strongest opponent of Government agency could suggest as likely to result from that system."

<sup>38</sup> Congress Report Vol I, p. 52. (See also Report of Select Committee of 1884, pp. 771-781.)

<sup>39</sup> *Annual Report on Railways in India*, 1872-73.

According to Hyndman (*Bankruptcy of India*, p. 65) Sir Juland Danvers said that £28,000,000 had been paid out for guaranteed interest by the end of 1876.

<sup>40</sup> Parliamentary Report of 1873. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, pp. 356-7.

<sup>41</sup> Parliamentary Report of 1873. The actual discussion at the moment was with regard to tariff policy, but the principles elucidated would apply equally well to the matter of railways. In the 'Sixties the Second Industrial Revolution (i.e. of the Heavy Industries) led to the creation of new capitalist interests destined to become in time more powerful than those of Lancashire textile manufacturers. Big railway contracts offered the finest markets for these heavy industries.

<sup>42</sup> Parliamentary Report of 1873.

<sup>43</sup> Congress Report, Vol II, pp. 93-95. The "market value" at which the Government eventually purchased the railways was determined not by their real worth but by the fact that the capital expended—however extravagantly—could not fail to pay its guaranteed dividend. Hence extravagance in construction meant an artificially inflated purchasing price. The loss on deficits is actually given as Rs. 51 crores in 1931. In calculating this roughly at £40,000,000 the author has used an average ratio of exchange but not allowed for increased deficits since 1931.

<sup>44</sup> The Indian Expenditure Commission of 1895, commonly known as the Welby Commission.

<sup>45</sup> The Bombay Development Scheme was a post-war folly during the administration of the present Lord Lloyd in the Bombay Presidency. "Development schemes" have long been a source of profit to British Contractors but of doubtful value to the Indian public.

<sup>46</sup> Report of the Indian Expenditure Commission, Vol II, p. 370.

<sup>47</sup> See *The Science of Public Finance* by Professor Findlay Shirras, Director of Statistics to the Government of India from 1914-1921.

The Church of India (which receives the benefit of this pension) is simply an off-shoot of the Church of England; that is to say it is a State-Church, adhering to the Anglican communion. Outside the British community its membership in India is negligible; and the £200,000 a year is mainly used for such purposes as the maintenance of the Bishop's palace at Calcutta—a marked contrast to the hovels of the Hindu peasants who are forced to contribute to its upkeep. The European population in British India is officially estimated at 116,916 out of a total population of over 250,000,000. Even the Indian Christian Community (mainly "Syrian") is only a little over 3,000,000, according to the last census.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 183.



<sup>49</sup> Continuation of Mill's History, Vol VII, p. 347.

<sup>50</sup> Dutt, Vol II, pp. xiii and xiv (preface).

<sup>51</sup> *Our Financial Relations with India*, by Sir George Wingate. The full quotation is given on pp. 96-7.

<sup>52</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. xiv (preface). He shows that the Home Charges were equivalent to the total land revenue of India in the year 1900-1901.

<sup>53</sup> *Bankruptcy of India*, by H. M. Hyndman, p. 55. Interest on the sterling debt plus Home Charges total to-day nearly £30,000,000. Adding to this the salaries of British civil and military officials and the interest on private capital invested, the annual drain from India is probably nearer £50,000,000 at the present time.

<sup>54</sup> *Eastern India*, by Montgomery Martin, London, 1838.

<sup>55</sup> *Notes on Indian Affairs*, London, 1837. "It has always been our boast," he said, "how greatly we have raised the revenue above that which the native rulers were able to extort."

<sup>56</sup> Minute on Indian Fiscal Policy, 1875. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, pp. xii-xiii (preface).

<sup>57</sup> Loveday in *The History and Economics of Indian Famines* shows that famines were worse in the latter half of the nineteenth century than at any previous time.

<sup>58</sup> Third Report of the Select Committee, 1853, pp. 19 and 20. Sullivan had been British Resident at Mysore and "Collector" (i.e. of revenue) at Coimbatour. Twenty years earlier Sullivan had told the Select Committee of 1832 that the natives of India suffered from "their exclusion from all offices of trust and emolument, and from that position in the administration of the country, civil and military, which they occupied under their own princes." In answer to a further question he had said "I should say that nothing can compensate them under such exclusion." (Select Committee of 1832. Minutes of Evidence Vol I, pp. 65 and 66.)

<sup>59</sup> "Talk of this savage and destructive war now waging in the East of Europe," said Bright (in 1878), "all that war has done and all that the wars of the past ten years have done, has not been equal, in the destruction of human life, to the destruction caused by the famines which have occurred in the great dependency of the English Crown in India." (*Life and Times of John Bright*, by William Robertson, p. 487.)

<sup>60</sup> *Bankruptcy of India*, p. 152.

<sup>61</sup> See Dutt, Vol II, p. 534.

<sup>62</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 535. The Government's own losses as a result of this famine, owing to general impoverishment, led it to institute a system of famine relief in imitation of earlier rulers of India.

<sup>63</sup> *India and its Problems*, by W. S. Lilley. He shows the steady growth of famine throughout the nineteenth century, and gives the following approximate figures from the official estimates:

Years	Famine Deaths
1800-25	1,000,000
1825-50	400,000
1850-75	5,000,000
1875-1900	15,000,000

Many estimates are much larger than these.

<sup>64</sup> *Memoirs and Correspondence*, London, 1830. Vol II, p. 413. Letter to the Rt. Hon. Charles Wyndham Wynn, dated Karnatic, March, 1826. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 369-370. Dutt points out that the Bishop avoided expressing himself on this subject in his journal, which was written for publication: even greater discretion was to become even more common in later years. Dutt says that there was a reduction in the land tax in Bombay and Madras after Heber's time, but that it was "still excessive." All the evidence indicates that poverty continued, however, to increase.

<sup>65</sup> According to H. H. Wilson (Mill, Vol VII, pp. 299-300) the Hindu law enacted that the King should have a twelfth, an eighth or a sixth of the produce, but in time of war he might take one-fourth. Assessments varied according to quality of land, and were taken in kind, which made the peasant less concerned with price variations. Moslem rulers demanded more, but Akbar limited the land-tax to one-third of the produce.

<sup>66</sup> Mr. W. S. Lilley in *India and its Problems* gives a similar and equally gruesome description of famine in the latter half of the century.

<sup>67</sup> Of the rule of the Indian princes before the time of the British conquests Macaulay wrote significantly in his *Essay on Clive*: "Under their old masters they (i.e., the people of India) had at least one resource; when the evil became insupportable, the people rose and pulled down the government. But the English government was not to be so shaken off. That government, oppressive as the most oppressive form of barbarian despotism, was strong with all the strength of civilisation. It resembled the government of evil Genii, rather than the government of human tyrants." After 1858 the same became true of the rule of Indian princes; for as good servants of the Empire they enjoyed the protection of the British—"the hereditary nobility of mankind," as Macaulay calls them.

## CHAPTER VII

### THEY MADE A WILDERNESS

LOOKING back upon the achievements of the nineteenth century, an English aristocrat who had studied social conditions both in Egypt and India wrote as follows regarding the conditions of the Indian peasantry:

“India’s famines have been severer and more frequent, its agricultural poverty has deepened, its rural population has become more hopelessly in debt, their despair more desperate. . . . Though myself a good Conservative. . . . I own to being shocked at the bondage in which the Indian people are held . . . And I have come to the conclusion that if we go on developing the country at the present rate, the inhabitants, sooner or later, will have to resort to cannibalism, for there will be nothing left for them to eat.”<sup>1</sup>

The years following the revolt of 1857 were, as we have seen, marked by a rapid increase in the public debt, involving increased burdens upon a poverty-stricken population. The first thirteen years of Crown administration have been briefly summarised by Mr. L. H. Jenks in his *Migration of British Capital*:<sup>2</sup>

“The burdens that it was found convenient to charge to India seem preposterous. The costs of the Mutiny, the price of the transfer of the Company’s rights to the Crown . . . wars in China and Abyssinia, every Governmental item in London that remotely related to India, down to the fees of the charwoman in the India Office and the expenses of ships that sailed but did not participate in the hostilities, and the cost of Indian regiments for six months’ training at home before they sailed—all were charged to the account of the unrepresented ryot. The Sultan of Turkey visited London in 1868 in state,

and his official ball was arranged for at the India Office and the bill charged to India. A lunatic asylum in Ealing, gifts to members of a Zanzibar mission, the consular and diplomatic establishments of Great Britain in China and in Persia, part of the permanent expenses of the Mediterranean Fleet and the entire cost of a line of telegraph from England to India had been charged before 1870 to the Indian Treasury. It is small wonder that the Indian revenues swelled from 33 millions a year to 52 millions a year during the first thirteen years of Crown administration, and that deficits accumulated from 1866 to 1870 amounting to  $11\frac{1}{2}$  millions. A Home Debt of £30,000,000 was brought into existence between 1857 and 1860, and steadily added to, while British statesmen achieved reputations for economy and financial skill through judicious manipulation of the Indian accounts."

We have already considered the principal item of what is generally termed the "productive debt." No account of these financial obligations would be complete, however, without some mention of the war debt after 1857, referred to by Mr. Jenks; and a few instances may be selected for examination.

It is important first to realise that the division of India's outstanding debt into "productive" and "unproductive" items is extremely misleading. The public debt is not connected with any particular items apart from railway annuities, and it is purely by a conventional distribution that items in the debt as it stands should be connected with specific purposes. Thus, for example, the loss on the railways has been largely met from current revenues and from Famine Insurance grants; but this depletion of national resources must have meant that more money had to be borrowed for other purposes than would otherwise have been necessary.

It has also been the practice in Indian Government finance to reduce war debts and other unproductive obligations where this could be done, so as to be able to show productive assets as far as possible against all national commitments. But it is clear that every million pounds paid off in reduction of a war debt could have been used

to pay off part of a productive debt if the war debt had not existed. It is important, therefore, not to be misled by figures which appear to show that the present debt is mainly "productive," when that debt itself would be much smaller but for the repayment of "unproductive" loans for such purposes as war. The conquest of India was carried out piecemeal entirely at the cost of the Indian taxpayer, and mainly by war loans (raised by the Company before 1858 and later by the Government). These loans were all made chargeable upon the Indian revenues, so that India was acquired without costing Great Britain a single half-penny; and it is the total cost of their own conquest by the British in addition to such military costs as are surveyed below that must be taken into account in considering the reasons which make India to-day a debtor country.

{In the year 1867 Great Britain became involved in a war with Abyssinia.<sup>3</sup> An army was sent from India under the command of Robert Napier, who entered the Ethiopian capital with an ease which Mussolini must often have envied. The cost of the expedition, however, was largely borne by the Indian exchequer, which paid £600,000 for a war in which India was not even remotely interested. "I recollect very well," wrote Lord Lawrence, "that, in 1859 and 1860, India was even charged for the cost of unreasonably large numbers of men who were accumulated in the depots in England, nominally for the Indian service. . . . In the present case India has no interest whatever in the Abyssinia expedition, and it appears therefore to me that she should pay none of the cost."<sup>4</sup>

Lord Salisbury, discussing the same question, deplored the idea that India should be "looked upon as an English barrack in the Oriental Seas from which we may draw any number of troops without paying for them."<sup>5</sup> The same view was taken by Sir Charles Trevelyan in his evidence before the Fawcett Committee. "India," he said, "had nothing to do with the proceedings which brought about the Abyssinia War and was not much concerned with the result

"In fact, India was in no way more concerned with our expedition to Abyssinia than were Australia and Canada. . . . The only reason why we did not make a similar demand from Australia and Canada to help pay the expenses of that war was that we knew perfectly well that they would indignantly scout such a proposal; they would not listen to it for a moment, would they? Well, I am bound as an honest man to say that I see no real difference."<sup>6</sup>

A similar case was that of the Perak expedition of 1875. Of the cost Lord Northbrook said: "It was a very small one; but in this Perak case I cannot conceive anyone doubting that India has been hardly treated. . . . I happened to be the Governor-General at the time, and I protested against this charge being put upon India."<sup>7</sup> But a much more serious instance was the Second Afghan War of 1878, which cost £22,000,000. Great Britain contributed five million pounds to this cost, leaving India seventeen millions to pay.

This war, "almost as chequered as the earlier one, and as unnecessary and with as little honour in its memory,"<sup>8</sup> was the direct result of British foreign policy, which had pressed upon the Indian Government its own aggressive designs against Afghanistan. The earlier war with this country has already been mentioned in the previous chapter. Dost Mohammed, who had then been ruling in Kabul, is described by Justin McCarthy as "a sincere lover of his country, and on the whole a wise and just ruler."<sup>9</sup> His crime had been that he had entered into friendly relations with Russia after being cold-shouldered by the British authorities in India; and for this cause the British had declared war. The conflict had lasted four years, brought neither profit nor credit to any of the parties concerned, and ended with the restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*.

The occasion of the Second Afghan War was very similar. Lord Lytton had succeeded the Earl of Northbrook<sup>10</sup> as Viceroy,<sup>11</sup> and he went to India, as he himself admitted, "specially instructed to treat the Indian Frontier question as an indivisible part of the great Imperial question,

mainly depending for its solution upon the general policy of Her Majesty's government."<sup>12</sup> Shortly after Lytton's arrival the Government "determined to send a mission to Shere Ali . . . the ruler of Kabul, in order to guard against Russian intrigue by establishing a distinct and paramount influence in Afghanistan. . . . It (the mission) was so numerous as to look rather like an army than an embassy."<sup>13</sup> The mission was stopped on the frontier, and this fact was made a *casus belli* by the British authorities.

The contrast in treatment between self-governing and non-self-governing peoples was once more brought forward in connection with this war. Mr. Fawcett told the House of Commons that a war had been fought in the self-governing colony at the Cape for which Britain, in his view, was not responsible. This war would cost the English people some five million pounds. In India, on the other hand, a war for which the Indian people were not responsible—a war which grew out of our own policy and actions in Europe—was to be paid for by the people of India because they were not self-governed and were not represented.<sup>14</sup> Even Gladstone went a long way in support of this view.<sup>15</sup>

Further minor expeditions followed, such as the military operations in Egypt which took place in 1882. For some unexplained reason, over two-thirds of the total costs in this instance were borne by India.<sup>16</sup> Between this date and 1891 a succession of expeditions on the Indian frontier were undertaken at a total cost of nearly £13,000,000; a figure which (as the evidence given before the Welby Commission shows) did not include the normal pay of the standing army.

The third Burmese War, of 1885, which resulted in the annexation of another vast province, is worthy of rather more detailed consideration. King Thebaw of Burma had been scandalising the British public for some years previously, for handbills were distributed explaining that he was a drunkard.<sup>17</sup> British merchants in Rangoon had urged the annexation of Upper Burma as the only action sufficiently strong to deal with the case; and the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce addressed a circular to British

Chambers of Commerce urging pressure on the Government.<sup>18</sup>

King Thebaw, who appears to have continued to drink while these ominous negotiations were in progress, in his sober moments concluded treaties with France, Germany and Italy. He even agreed to the establishment of a French bank and the construction of a French railway, to French steamers and French oil concessions—a procedure which shocked the conscience of Lord Salisbury more profoundly than even the wildest inebriation of the Burmese monarch. Consequently the British Prime Minister interviewed the French ambassador, whereupon the French Government withdrew and recalled their envoy from Thebaw's capital at Ava.<sup>19</sup> But from that moment it was clear that only annexation could safeguard Burma in future from un-British banks and railways.

As so often happens in English history, the proper occasion for war with every moral and judicial sanction arose at the necessary moment. The High Court of Ava gave judgment against a British firm on a charge of defrauding the King's revenue of £73,000.<sup>20</sup> The Viceroy of India immediately intervened; but Thebaw, probably under the influence of liquor, questioned the right of the Indian Government to interfere in the decisions of his courts. The reply was an ultimatum, demanding the suspension of all proceedings against the British Company until the arrival of a permanent British "Resident," whose presence at the Burmese Court would place the Government at Ava on the same subservient basis as that enjoyed by the Indian princes. The Indian Viceroy demanded in addition that the foreign relations of the Burmese Government should in future be conducted in accordance with "advice" issued by the Government of India, and that special facilities should be granted by King Thebaw for the British trade with China.

To this ultimatum King Thebaw had the effrontery to reply that a case conducted within his jurisdiction against a firm operating on Burmese territory was not the business of the British Government or the Viceroy of India. He said that he would be happy to receive a British agent, as



he had done in the past (till the withdrawal of the British Mission from Ava in 1879).<sup>21</sup> For the rest, he claimed that his relations with other foreign powers were his own concern, and that the British could have just such trade facilities as the law of the land allowed them. It need hardly be added that this reply was considered a very proper and adequate reason for declaring war on King Thebaw, which was done in November, 1885. "The Kingdom of Burma," as Mr. Dodwell puts it, "offered a notable instance of the difficulty of maintaining friendly relations (in the European sense of the word) with an Asiatic State."<sup>22</sup>

The war that followed was brief. There was little armed resistance to the British forces, but heavy casualties resulted from fever. "To punish King Thebaw of Ava for discriminating against the British in trade concessions (there was also a Gladstonian motive of putting down cruelty and barbarous practices) a British and Indian army under General Prendergast steamed up the Irrawady River."<sup>23</sup> Thebaw was made prisoner three weeks after his reply to the ultimatum had been received. He had killed off most of his possible rivals; and since, as Mr. Dodwell points out, "the only survivor thought to possess the necessary character was under French influence" it was obvious that "annexation was the only possible course." It proved, however, a more difficult process than dethroning King Thebaw, for the country took five years to subdue and the campaign required an army of over 30,000 men. "Unskilful endeavours to treat it as an Indian province" followed a succession of generally admitted blunders in the early administration of this newly acquired territory.<sup>24</sup> According to figures supplied to the Welby Commission, the whole cost of the subjugation of Burma, amounting to nearly £5,000,000 was charged to India.

About the same time Indian troops were sent into the Soudan, and ten years later (1896) the Indian Exchequer was involved in further expenses in that country which were the occasion of the following vigorous protest from the Government of India:

"In order to strengthen Soukin and to set free Egyptian troops for employment on the Nile, we have been asked to provide for a garrison composed of troops from the native army in India. We cannot perceive any Indian interests, however remote, which are involved in carrying on the policy above described. It cannot be alleged that the safety of the Suez Canal is involved. . . .

"We feel it our duty, in the interests of the country of which the administration is entrusted to us, to protest once more in the strongest terms against the policy which burdens the Indian revenues with the expenditure connected with services in which India has no interest."<sup>25</sup>

The protest concludes by denouncing such a policy as "inexpedient, because it exposes our government to attacks to which there is no adequate answer."<sup>26</sup>

Our last example of these curious uses of the Indian revenue is that of the Great War. From the outset of the War Indian troops were freely used, both in Europe and in the Arabian campaigns; but this was not considered sufficient. On September 8th, 1914, the Imperial Legislative Council (a body having no representative capacity whatsoever) therefore tabled a resolution, which it very naturally passed without any difficulty, expressing the usual devotion and loyalty to the King-Emperor.<sup>27</sup> This resolution then went on to the following astonishing assertion:

"They desire at the same time to express the opinion that the people of India, in addition to the military assistance now being afforded by India to the empire, would wish to share in the heavy financial burden now imposed by the war on the United Kingdom and request the Government of India to take this view into consideration and thus to demonstrate the unity of India with the Empire."<sup>28</sup>

Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, at first interpreted this offer (made so magnanimously on behalf of millions of unrepresented peasants) to mean that the ordinary costs of the Indian troops employed beyond the frontier would be borne by India. Anticipating an early end to the war, he suggested that one million sterling would not be an

unreasonable amount and added: "A contribution on more liberal lines than this would not, we think, be fair to the Indian tax-payer."<sup>29</sup>

In addition, however, to paying the ordinary charges of the Indian troops and their transport costs, a further gift of £100,000,000 was arranged between the Indian Government and the Secretary of State for India.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly (in March, 1917) Sir William Meyer, the Finance Member of the Indian Legislative Council, introduced the Budget to his mock Parliament in a significant speech which included the following observations:

"We have always felt, however, that if and when our circumstances warranted, we should take up the question of making a further direct contribution by India towards the struggle in which her own political and economic future is closely involved; and throughout which her trade and security have been so materially assisted by the command of the sea established by His Majesty's Navy, and we have been in constant touch with His Majesty's Government in regard to this matter. We hold that the time has now come, at which we can safely put our wish into effect and thereby gratify still further the patriotic feeling unanimously expressed in this Council on the occasion of the resolution moved by Sir Gangadharrao Chitnavis. . . ."<sup>31</sup>

The hundred million pounds of which Sir William Meyer now proceeded to dispose amounted, in his own words, to nearly double the Imperial revenues of India as they stood before the War. This, however, was still considered insufficient; and further assistance was offered to the British Exchequer by the Indian Government in September, 1918. On this occasion an indirect contribution was made of which the net value was about £26,000,000.<sup>32</sup> A sum of about a hundred and twenty-six million sterling was thus paid by India towards Britain's war expenses, in addition to costs already defrayed by India in connection with her vastly enlarged military expenditure.<sup>33</sup>

The total cost of the Great War to India was in the neighbourhood of £240,000,000—no trifling sum (as Indian

post-war deficits clearly show) for the poorest country in the world to contribute to the war-chest of the wealthiest country, when the latter was fighting in defence of its vast assets.<sup>34</sup> There has since been much talk of repudiation with regard to war debts; and even the British Government, with its enormous credit at stake, has felt compelled to avail itself of a moratorium with regard to its American obligations, on which it has virtually defaulted. Thus, while the democratic countries (whose responsibility must clearly be greatest for debts contracted by their governments) hold themselves free to repudiate those obligations in case of necessity, those who had no choice with regard to heavy debts incurred on their behalf are compelled by a curious code of honour to pay with their last pound of flesh.

Before concluding the war record of the British Empire with regard to India there is another, and equally important aspect of the question which every student of imperialism in action should thoroughly investigate.

In 1928 Sir Austen Chamberlain, then Foreign Secretary to the British Government, wrote a note to the Government of the United States that defined in no uncertain terms the attitude of the British Empire to international problems. This note contained the reservations stipulated by Great Britain in signing the Kellog Pact. Much was made of that pact at the time by peace-loving people in all parts of the world. What the pact actually meant to the British Government may be surmised from the following sentences contained in the Chamberlain note:

"There are certain regions of the world the welfare and integrity of which constitute a special and vital interest for our peace and safety. . . . Their protection against attack is to the British a measure of self-defence. It must be clearly understood that His Majesty's Government in Great Britain accept the treaty *upon the distinct understanding that it does not prejudice their freedom of action in this respect.*"

From this note it will be observed that Great Britain, at the very moment when she agreed to a treaty "outlawing

war," stipulated that she should have complete freedom of action to protect certain regions (unspecified) against attack. Or to put the matter more plainly Britain was prepared for peace on the basis of the *Status quo*, but would fight if any part of her Empire were threatened.<sup>35</sup>

To the student of politics this explicit statement by the British Government will seem quite unnecessary. Empires are built up and maintained by military force. Those who desire an Empire must be prepared to fight for it. Those who wish to retain an existing Empire must be ready to go on fighting for it, suppressing rebellion, whether armed or unarmed, by the same method, and defending conquered territory against external aggression.<sup>36</sup> But to the student of politics, for this very same reason, the Kellog Pact must appear a meaningless agreement. No bandit can afford to disarm until he has restored his stolen property, and an agreement not to shoot unless his stolen property is threatened is entirely superfluous.

The British Ministers must have been singularly lacking in a sense of humour if the Kellog Pact was ever taken seriously by them, and the present author would not be so unpatriotic as to suggest that our ruling class is dull. Anyone with any knowledge of history is perfectly well aware that all wars for the past 200 years and more have been fought on what may be called the "Chamberlain Reservation."<sup>37</sup> Certainly in the past they were fought in order to *acquire* these "certain regions of the world," whereas to-day it is proposed to protect them as "a measure of self-defence." Having swallowed as much of the world as it could digest, the British Government therefore renounced any intention of seizing more, but announced at the same time its determination to keep what it had got.

The history of India under British rule is, from this point of view alone, worth a little study and reflection. We have observed that the power of the East India Company grew as the power of the Great Mughals was nearing its end. It was such a period as the world has often witnessed, when the destinies of nations are re-shaped. From the chaos that followed the breaking-up of the Roman Empire, a new and healthier civilization arose. In a later age the

power of Spain was broken for the betterment of mankind. But in India the normal course of political evolution was frustrated at the most critical period in her history, and the transient despotism of the Mughal emperors was replaced by a system that rooted itself deeply and rapidly by every available means. The dependence of India became not simply political but commercial: her subservience not only outward, but inward and psychological.

It is impossible to say with certainty what would have happened if the country had been left to itself. The history of mankind is so full of unforeseen events that none can tell whether India's development would have been swifter or slower than that of the West. Few would have dared to prophesy at one time that the Kingdom of the Pharaohs would become a dependency of an unknown island beyond the Pillars of Hercules. In more recent times Japan stood forth suddenly as the rival and equal of the Western Powers. And so the alternative destiny that lay before India must always be a matter of purest speculation. All that we know is the price that India and the world have paid for what actually happened, and the reckoning that yet awaits us, if cause and effect still hold good in the political world.

The early history of the British in India is bound up with the question of Anglo-French relations. Indeed, it would be even more accurate to say that Anglo-French relations at that time were bound up with British and French ambitions in India. It is in any case certain that Anglo-French rivalry had no solid basis in Continental affairs. England and France opposed each other in the War of the Austrian Succession (1741-1748) as the sponsors of Austria and Prussia respectively. A few years later they stood face to face once more; but in respect of the dispute that was still the main issue on the Continent (i.e., the possession of Silesia) the two Powers had changed sides.

It was, in fact, apparent, both from this evidence and the known policy of the elder Pitt, who was all-powerful from 1757-1761, that the real quarrel between France and England lay in India and Canada. Pitt subsidized Frederick of Prussia to keep the French armies occupied in Europe while he worked out his designs in the remoter parts of the

earth. For over twenty years (1741-1763) England and France conducted their feud on land and sea, in what may be considered the first world war. In Canada the Red Indians were drawn into the conflict. Central Europe was made the battle-ground of a bloody struggle. In India, as we have seen, the divisions between rival nawabs were exploited by the rival powers of Europe.

From the end of the eighteenth century the British power in India remained undisputed by European rivals, but India by no means ceased to be a cause of European wars. Without doubt it was the British power in the East that fired Napoleon with the ambition to found a great Eastern empire, and sent him on his ill-fated expedition to Egypt.<sup>38</sup> The conquest of Egypt was to have been the first step in a plan that Bonaparte had laid before the French Directory for a campaign in Southern India, where Tipu Sultan had promised his support.

Four years after the Battle of the Nile had destroyed this scheme the Peace of Amiens brought a short respite to the world; and when hostilities broke out again the following year, the cause was extremely significant. The Island of Malta had been captured from the Knights of St. John by Bonaparte on his way to Egypt, and subsequently recaptured by the English. The British Government were not slow to realise the value of this stronghold in protecting the route to India, and its retention of the island had already been the occasion of war with Russia. Its restoration to its former owners was one of the terms of the Peace of Amiens, and Britain's failure to fulfil this pledge was the direct cause of the renewal of Anglo-French hostility in May, 1803. An imperialist historian says of this incident:

"Its retention marks the entry of India and her affairs into European politics, for Malta was a stronghold on the way to Egypt and the Red Sea route to India."<sup>39</sup>

We have seen that this statement is not strictly accurate, as India had already become involved in the politics of Europe; but it is interesting to notice the far-reaching effects of Imperial policy in disturbing the world's peace at this time. Napoleon was the last Frenchman to threaten

British control of India, and with his failure Anglo-French rivalry comes to an end, except for sporadic instances of conflicting colonial interests in other parts of the world. From this time onwards British diplomacy became obsessed with what was known as "the Russian Bogey," and British foreign policy up to (and even after) the formation of the Triple Entente, was dictated largely by the fear of Russian aggression in the East, with particular reference to India.

The British Government now began to use every possible means to preserve the Ottoman Empire. On the Red Sea route a subservient Turkey was considered preferable to a belligerent Russia; and for the next hundred years the British Government became absorbed in wars and intrigues in the Near East.

This was the cause of British interference in the quarrel between Mehemet Ali and the Sultan. "Palmerston," according to the epilogue to Green's *History*, "had a single purpose—so to restore the old boundaries of the Turkish Empire that it should remain in occupation of the roads to India."<sup>40</sup> The action of England at that time in driving Mehemet Ali out of Asia nearly led to war with France. Rejecting a French proposal for the freedom or neutrality of the Suez and Euphrates routes, Britain protected the road to India her own way. The Treaty of London (1841) secured the Empire of Britain by guaranteeing that of the Sultan, and the Syrian Christians (for whose case France had pleaded—not without political motives) were restored to the *Pax Ottomana*.

The Crimean War, with its terrible cost in human suffering, is the next landmark in Imperial history. Here again Britain was concerned with maintaining the integrity of the Turkish Empire as a corollary of her Indian policy. Eleven years later Europe hovered on the verge of another war, when the bombastic declarations of Disraeli threw Great Britain into a diplomatic conflict with Russia over the same issue. The atrocities committed by the Turkish Government in 1876 were probably unequalled in the whole record of the Ottoman Empire, and were made the subject of a vigorous political campaign by Mr. Gladstone. However, in the words of Justin McCarthy:



"The cry went forth . . . that the moment the Turks went out of Constantinople, the Russians must come in. Nothing could have been better suited to rouse up reaction and alarm. . . . Lord Beaconsfield was for maintaining Turkey *at all risks* as a barrier against Russia. Mr. Gladstone was for removing all responsibility for Turkey and taking the consequences."<sup>41</sup>

The risks were doubtless felt by the world at large, and more particularly by the Sultan's subjects in Bulgaria.

This time, however, what Disraeli called "peace with honour" was maintained. "Peace with honour" was the work of the Congress of Berlin, where the British Prime Minister made, with the other delegates, a solemn statement that he was not bound by any secret engagements affecting the matters under discussion. In point of fact he was bound by two such engagements, of which one was a promise to maintain Turkey in all her Asiatic possessions against all invasion in return for Turkish acquiescence in the occupation of Cyprus by Great Britain.<sup>42</sup> By such honourable means was the road to India secured once more.

The protection of this route had acquired additional importance by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Continual British interference in Egyptian politics, which followed this event, may be traced largely to the military necessities arising from the Indian Empire. For this reason Disraeli had bought the Khedive's shares in the Canal Company; and England, therefore, continued her policy of intervention after France had abandoned the dual control of Egypt. On the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 Mr. Prothero writes: "France was unwilling to interfere . . . but England could not leave the Suez Canal to be dealt with as Arabi chose."<sup>43</sup> Fresh campaigns followed as a result in Egypt and the Sudan.

The year following the Congress of Berlin was marked by the Second Afghan War, to which reference has already been made, showing its intimate connection with Anglo-Russian relations. The more recent history of British relations with Russia up to the Great War included the frontier "incident" at Penjdeh in 1885 which nearly brought the two Powers into conflict. In 1905 the opening

of negotiations between Tibet and Russia was the reason for the "armed mission" sent to Llassa by Lord Curzon.<sup>44</sup> The term *mission* as applied to these military expeditions is perhaps the greatest triumph in the history of official phraseology, though it may be doubted whether an army of invasion is more acceptable by any other name. Lord Salisbury's despatch on the subject of the "mission" which led to the second Afghan War may be quoted in this connection:

"The first step, therefore, in establishing our relations with the Ameer upon a more satisfactory footing will be to induce him to receive a temporary embassy in his capital. *It need not be publicly connected with the establishment of a permanent Mission within his dominions. There would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest which it will not be difficult for Your Excellency to find or if need be, to create.* I have, therefore, to instruct you, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, without any delay that you can reasonably avoid, to find some occasion for sending a mission to Cabul; and to press the reception of this Mission very earnestly upon the Ameer."<sup>45</sup>

The "mission" in this instance, as we have already noted, was diagnosed by the Afghans (who proved to be right) as an army of invasion.

After the formation of the Triple Entente the fear of Germany largely replaced the fear of Russia in English minds; but once more there can be little doubt that British jealousy of Germany's activities in the East were closely bound up with this change. As early as 1835 Von Moltke and other Prussian officers had undertaken the reconstruction of the Turkish army, and by the end of the nineteenth century German influence had acquired a strong hold over the Sultan's Government. In 1898 the German Emperor visited Syria and proclaimed himself the protector of Mohammedans throughout the world.<sup>46</sup> Britain's distrust of this menace to her Eastern Empire showed itself in a refusal to assist in the German project for a railway to Baghdad. The plan was continued, however, with the co-operation of Turkey. But Russian ambitions were nere

threatened almost as much as those of England, and the historic rivals of the Near East were drawn together against the intruder. So did the Indian Empire play its part in bringing on the world war of 1914.

All this time, while the Indian frontier and the road to India had been disturbing the courts of Europe, the repercussions of British Imperialism in India had been equally felt in the Far East. In 1837 the "Heathen Chinese" had vetoed the importation of opium and "*the English Merchants in India*, stimulated by the high profit made from its sale, smuggled it into the country,"<sup>47</sup> the Indian Government, meanwhile, protesting strongly against the loss of revenue occasioned by the reforms in China. The Chinese Government seized and destroyed the smuggled opium, and for the sake of these "English Merchants in India" Great Britain went to war in 1842. China was compelled to pay £4,500,000 for the cost of the war and £1,250,000 for the contraband opium destroyed and to grant British subjects immunity from Chinese justice. She was also forced to "open" five ports—that is to say, in effect, to withdraw her prohibition against British imports.<sup>48</sup> So ended the first Chinese War—the direct result of British economic interests in India.

The second "Opium War" was no less discreditable,<sup>49</sup> and was condemned in the British Parliament at the time both by Radicals and Tories. The Chauvinism of the "men on the spot" rather than Indian imperial enterprise was the immediate cause of the second and third war with China; but inasmuch as they were rendered almost inevitable by the treaty that concluded the first war, they may undoubtedly be traced to the same source. No survey of Indo-Chinese relations would be complete without mention of British intervention in China during the year 1927, when Indian troops were employed against the explicit wishes of all parties in the Indian Legislative Assembly.<sup>50</sup> The complete disregard with which this protest was treated caused widespread resentment throughout the country.

British gains from the Great War included Palestine; and the war which has broken out between the Arab

population and the British Government while this book was being written is a reminder that Palestine is held principally for two reasons, of which one is the control of access to the oil-fields of Irak and the other is the strategic position of Palestine on the route to India. This latter point was strongly brought out in a recent Parliamentary debate on the Palestine Mandate, when the strategic importance of Palestine was emphasised by various speakers, including Commander Locker-Lampson and Mr. Amery.<sup>51</sup>

It would be rash indeed to prophesy what future wars, within the terms of Sir Austen Chamberlain's reservations to the Kellogg Pact, are likely to arise from the British occupation of India. During the period of intervention against Soviet Russia the British Empire carried out an unsuccessful crusade in Central Asia with the object of restoring Czardom. The failure of this campaign deprived Britain of any rich concessions which may have been anticipated from the grateful Romanoffs; but the tension between the two countries remains.<sup>52</sup> The main danger of war does not arise, however, from the possibilities of further British aggression. The maintenance of the *status quo* alone involves, as we have seen, ramifications of policy that can at any time draw this country into a war in almost any part of the world.

*Pax Britannica* in India is a form of peace that has involved Great Britain in a continual succession of wars and will produce a further succession of similar struggles until less fortunate Powers can be made to understand that they do not deserve and ought not to expect either the wealth or the prestige which our ruling class enjoys.<sup>53</sup> *Pax Britannica* was so nearly endangered by the Italian operations against Abyssinia in 1935 that only other considerations of imperial expediency prevented a war between Britain and Italy for the control of vital points on the route to India.<sup>54</sup> With the deepening of the economic crisis that has overtaken capitalist society, the control of colonies assumes a growing importance to a system that depends for its very existence upon expanding markets and fields of investment.<sup>55</sup> To the younger empires of America and Japan, to modern Germany and

to Italy, this must mean ultimately conflict with Britain. If Rome is to survive, Carthage must be destroyed.

To India, however, the price of *Pax Britannica* cannot be measured simply in terms of its ultimate cost in war. It is true that during the nineteenth century the British Government in that country conducted no less than a hundred and eleven wars, raids and military expeditions;<sup>56</sup> so that the "peace" imposed might be termed deceptive, quite apart from the international wars in which the conquest of India has involved Britain and other countries.

All this is natural enough: "The same arts that did gain a power must it maintain."

But peace, says the modern Indian nationalist (whose history we shall shortly survey) is a doubtful blessing when combined with poverty, famine, illiteracy and disease. Bought at a cost of national degradation, where generations are born in inferiority and bred to a sense of servility, "peace" is in his opinion a very manifest evil.<sup>57</sup> Nor is peace universally regarded as a blessing when purchased by the loss of political independence; as witness the amazing number of countries which have not yet applied for the privilege of being ruled by Great Britain. "Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant," said the great Roman historian of the Empire-builders in his own time;<sup>58</sup> and we too, who have brought to India poverty and degradation have also taught ourselves to dignify our wilderness with the name of peace.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The English Occupation of Egypt*, by Wilfred Scawen Blunt, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 223-4.

<sup>3</sup> The real object of this war is somewhat obscure; but the French suggestion that it was fought in order to discover a sanatorium for English troops may be discredited. The fact that the British did not remain in occupation of Abyssinia makes the value of Italy's new colony extremely dubious.

<sup>4</sup> *Life of Lord Laurence*, by Bosworth Smith, Vol II, p. 390. It was suggested at the Welby Commission enquiry that India had to pay for the Abyssinian War because English prestige was involved.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in the Congress Report, Vol I, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Charles Trevelyan's evidence before the Parliamentary Committee on East Indian Expenditure, 1876, Vol III, p. 151.

<sup>7</sup> Evidence of the Earl of Northbrook given before the Welby Commission, Vol III, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson's *History of India*, p. 71. Afghanistan escaped annexation for strategic reasons which were explained by Sir Francis Humphreys (a former British Minister at Kabul) in an address to the Empire Parliamentary Association on November 19th, 1929.

<sup>9</sup> *Short History of Our Times*, by Justin McCarthy.

<sup>10</sup> The policy forced upon the Indian Government with regard to Afghanistan was vigorously opposed by Lord Northbrook as Viceroy. His resignation in 1876 was due to disagreement with Salisbury regarding both Afghanistan and the question of cotton tariffs. According to Lord Cromer, Northbrook "thought he saw in Lord Salisbury's proceedings a first step towards a far more complete subordination of India and Indian interests to England and British interests than had heretofore existed. To a certain extent he was probably right." (Quoted by Bernard Mallet in *Thomas George, Earl of Northbrook*, London, 1908.)

<sup>11</sup> The term Viceroy came into use for the Governors-General of India after 1858.

<sup>12</sup> *Hansard*, vol 251, p. 923. Quoted before the Welby Commission, vol III, p. 467.

<sup>13</sup> *Short History of Our Times*, by Justin McCarthy.

Lord Lawrence opposed the sending of the "mission" and pointed out that the Afghans had a right to resist it "bearing in mind to what such missions often lead, and what Burne's mission in 1836 did actually bring upon them." (Letter to *The Times*, quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 430.)

<sup>14</sup> *Hansard*, Vol 251, p. 926. Quoted before the Welby Commission, Vol III, p. 467.

<sup>15</sup> *Hansard*, Vol 251, p. 935. Quoted before the Welby Commission, Vol III, p. 467.

<sup>16</sup> £1,200,000 out of £1,700,000. It was the view of Major-General E. H. H. Collen, who was Military Secretary to the Government of India, that this charge on the Indian revenues was without the slightest justification. (Welby Commission, Vol I, p. 401.)

<sup>17</sup> This appears to have been a common vice with the Burmese, for the *Cambridge Shorter History of India* complains that the Governor of Rangoon in 1850 was "a man given to liquor." (p. 824.)

<sup>18</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 443.

The *Cambridge Shorter History* says that "commercial and especially missionary opinion ran strongly in favour of annexation," and mentions an attempt by English and Chinese merchants to bring about a revolution in 1884. (p. 827.)

<sup>19</sup> The French, as Mr. Dodwell explains, "had nourished a policy which they were unable or unwilling to support by force of arms." (*Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 828.)

<sup>20</sup> They were also accused of having failed to pay their employees. The sum of £72 000 represented royalties owing to the State on a big

concession in cutting and selling teak. When the case went against the British firm, the Burmese Government cancelled this concession and were considering an offer to French merchants when war was declared by Lord Dufferin.

<sup>21</sup> Thebaw's objection to receiving a British "Resident" may be more easily understood when it is recollected that (according to Captain Grant Duff, the historian of the Mahrathas) a British Resident was sent to Poona "to foment domestic dissensions." As we have seen in the case of Suraj-ad-dowla, this was not considered outside the rules. General Gordon (as quoted by Major Basu in the *Modern Review* of Calcutta in July 1928) said: "I must say, I hate our diplomatists, I think with few exceptions they are arrant humbugs."

<sup>22</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 824.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Bott in *Our Fathers*. This interesting pictorial record of a past generation includes a contemporary sketch showing "an auction of loot in Mandalay after the first Burmese expedition." Loot was more openly spoken of in those days.

The *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, Mr. Frederick Boyle, in his republished despatches on the Ashantee War (London, 1874) has a chapter which is naively entitled "Dividing the Spoil." "Many times," he writes, "in one or other hemisphere has an English army sacked some barbarous capital and carried off the treasure stored therein. . . . An Indian Raja has precious stones. . . . China has silks and porcelain and works of art." It was not thought fitting that barbarians, if they could produce such things, should be permitted to retain them.

<sup>24</sup> *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 829. Even to this day the unpatriotic Burmese dislike being ruled by the British, and a rebellion in 1930 was crushed by the Labour Government. For the purpose of more intensive exploitation it was decided in 1930 to separate Burma from India. This plan was opposed by the General Council of Burmese Associations and the anti-separationists gained a decisive victory on this issue in the 1932 elections.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by C. N. Vakil in *Financial Development in Modern India*. Lord Northbrook's evidence before the Welby Commission is to the same effect: "As regards the force sent to Suakim last year, I say that certainly India should not have been charged." (Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 565.)

<sup>26</sup> These protests of the Indian Government are of special interest, because they show that even an administration which was in no sense responsible to the people of India was obliged, from time to time, for motives of sheer economy, to make efforts to check the rapacity of the London Government. Rarely if ever, in spite of this, did the counsels of the Indian Government prevail in such matters, since the Viceroy and his Council have no authority except that which they derive from London.

<sup>27</sup> The Council was composed mainly of Government officials; the rest of its members being persons nominated by the Government, including, of course, some safe and reliable Indians.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in the Congress Report, Vol I, p. 27. The resolution was moved by an Indian knight, whose English title would be sufficient indication that he was a better friend of the British Empire than of his

own countrymen. For the attitude of the Indian peasants at this time see Chapter IX.

<sup>29</sup> Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, Vol 53, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> *The Times*, July 1st, 1932.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in the Congress Report, Vol I, pp. 29-30.

<sup>32</sup> Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, Vol 57, pp. 167-168.

<sup>33</sup> These costs are estimated in the Congress Report at 170.7 crores of rupees.

<sup>34</sup> This sum of £240,000,000 offers an interesting comparison with Hardinge's estimate of one million of which he had said that a more liberal contribution would be unfair to the Indian taxpayer. In his statement on the report of the Mesopotamia Commission in the House of Lords (July 8th, 1917), Hardinge said that India had given everything it possessed both in troops and war materials to the Imperial Government and had been "bled absolutely white."

<sup>35</sup> Hence Professor Gilbert Slater's statement in the *Manchester Guardian* that "if we ask ourselves why the Government . . . declared that we have disarmed as far as possible, why it searches for new and more formidable types of bombing aeroplanes and poison gasses, the obvious answer is India."

<sup>36</sup> For a study of the methods and the ethics of imperial defence, see General Lord Wolseley's *Soldier's Pocket Book* (London, 1886), pages 5, 169, 301, 413, 418, in which the General explains the folly of chivalry and the advantages of exterminating "savages."

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note in this connection that by the Congo Act of 1885 the European Powers, anticipating in part the provisions of the Kellogg Pact, agreed to respect the neutrality of the Congo Basin in the event of war. So important, however, were the British reservations on this occasion that in 1914, though Germany, France and Belgium were all in favour of respecting the agreement, Britain refused to do so. Among the native peoples the war which followed in Africa "destroyed more life than a generation of inter-tribal wars," according to Dr. Norman Leys. (*Kenya*, p. 303.)

<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note that when a Conference was convened in 1793 to organise the first coalition against France, the British representative declared the intention of his government to conquer the French colonies, and opposed the proposal that the Coalition Powers should issue a manifesto disclaiming any intention to annex French territory.

<sup>39</sup> Prothero's *Development of the British Empire*, p. 80.

Another significant incident of this period was the restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy in Naples under the protection of Lord Nelson, the story of which is told by Marjorie Bowen in *Patriotic Lady: a study of Emma, Lady Hamilton, and the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799*. It is interesting that a reviewer of this book in the *Manchester Guardian* of January 3rd, 1936, says that "before the capture of Malta the English fleet was in desperate need of a Mediterranean base, and Naples was cheap at the price of a White Terror." He describes this terror, however, as "atrocious" and says that "the arrest (by Nelson) and execution of the republicans after a capitulation in which they had been promised a passæ to France is particularly disgusting."



<sup>40</sup> J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People*.

<sup>41</sup> *Short History of Our Times*, pp. 414, 415.

<sup>42</sup> The full significance of Cyprus in relation to India has yet to be realised. Before this book is published plans are likely to be in operation for constructing an air base on the island, strengthening its military defences, and building a new naval harbour. The "Cinderella Colony" (where 90 per cent of the population are generally admitted to be violently opposed to British occupation) is likely to replace Malta as a principal point of British strategic preparation on the Mediterranean route to India.

<sup>43</sup> *The Development of the British Empire*. This occurred under Gladstone's government and was the occasion of Bright's resignation from the Liberal Cabinet.

<sup>44</sup> G. P. Gooch, *History of Our Time*, p. 173.

<sup>45</sup> This despatch (dated Nov. 19th, 1875) was sent to Lord Northbrook before his resignation and replacement by Lord Lytton. The Viceroy, who, unlike his successor, disagreed with Salisbury's policy, replied that: "If a Mission is to be sent to Cabul, the most advisable course would be to state frankly and fully to the Ameer the real purpose of the Mission. The Ameer and his advisers are shrewd enough to understand that only matters of grave political importance could induce us to send a special Mission to His Highness's Court."

<sup>46</sup> This possibility, previously exploited by Napoleon, may yet re-emerge in a new form. *The Week* (10/6/1936) has published some interesting rumours and speculations—for what they are worth—purporting to indicate that Japan is now "interested" in Islam to the alarm of the British Foreign Office and the Quai D'Orsay.

<sup>47</sup> *Development of the British Empire*. (This is a charming and naive little text-book from which the present author quotes freely because it is intended for use in English schools.)

<sup>48</sup> Opium was not specifically mentioned in the Treaty, however; and Chinese objections to the continued traffic in this commodity helped to bring on the second war of 1857.

<sup>49</sup> See note 43, Chapter V.

<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that the Legislative Assembly as constituted in 1927 (under the Montagu-Chelmsford reformed constitution) had a representative character, though representation was limited by a narrow property franchise and the powers of the Assembly—as this instance testifies—were in fact non-existent. It should not, however, be confused with the completely unrepresentative Imperial Council referred to earlier in this chapter.

<sup>51</sup> See *Hansard*, June 19th, 1936. Mr. Amery (a former First Lord of the Admiralty, Colonial Secretary, etc.), said that "Palestine occupies a strategic position of immense importance. It is the Clapham Junction of all the air routes between this country, Africa and Asia." Both Amery and Locker-Lampson especially mentioned the importance of the Palestine mandate in maintaining control of the Suez Canal.

<sup>52</sup> This was the cause of the profound suspicion in the U.S.S.R. after the rising in Afghanistan against King Amanullah. *Izvestia* was confident that the outbreak was the result of a British intrigue, and

named "Aircraftsman Shaw" (the late Colonel Lawrence) in connection with it.

<sup>53</sup> This is the conception of peace upon which the policy of League of Nations enthusiasts in this country would appear to be based. *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la paix.*

<sup>54</sup> This point was clearly demonstrated in a pamphlet by the present author (*You Remember Abyssinia?*), published in April, 1936. An article in *Great Britain and the East* (Nov. 24th, 1935), spoke openly of the Italian threat to the route to India and linked up this fact with the concentration of British naval forces in the Mediterranean.

<sup>55</sup> *The Mining World and Engineering Record*, (Sept. 19th, 1936), has an interesting editorial note on "meddlesome legislation" in Mexico, with the ominous comment that "with all these meddlesome legislators, the world over, the activities of the British capitalist are becoming more limited. . . . He will adhere to the good mining shares of the Rand, India and other centres" (i.e. where he has political control).

<sup>56</sup> This figure was given in a Parliamentary Report of 1899 made at the request of John Morley. Morley himself is quoted by Dr. Sunderland as having said: "First, you push on into territories where you have no business to be, and where you had promised not to go; secondly, your intrusion provokes resentment and resentment means resistance; thirdly, you instantly cry out that the people are rebellious and that their act is rebellion (this in spite of your own assurance that you have no intention of setting up a permanent sovereignty over them); fourthly, you send a force to stamp out the rebellion; and fifthly, having spread bloodshed, confusion and anarchy, you declare, with hands uplifted to the heavens, that moral reasons force you to stay, for if you were to leave, this territory would be left in a condition which no civilized power could contemplate with equanimity or with composure. These are the five stages of the Rake's Progress." *Modern Review* (Calcutta) July, 1928. Article by the late Dr. Sunderland.

<sup>57</sup> W. J. ("Cross-of-Gold") Bryan after studying conditions in India published on his return to America a pamphlet on "British Rule in India and Its Results" in which he said of our government: "While they have boasted of bringing peace to the living, they have led millions to the peace of the grave."

<sup>58</sup> Tacitus in *Agricola*.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INDIAN VILLAGER

"I do not understand," said Sir Thomas Munro in 1813, "what is meant by the civilisation of the Hindus. In the higher branches of science, in the knowledge of the theory and practice of good government, and in education which, by banishing prejudice and superstition, opens the mind to receive instruction of every kind from every quarter, they are much inferior to Europeans.

"But if a good system of agriculture, unrivalled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to either convenience or luxury, schools established in every village for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, the general practice of hospitality and charity among each other, and above all, a treatment of the female sex full of confidence, respect and delicacy are among the signs which denote a civilised people, and if civilisation is to be an article of trade between England and India, I am convinced that England will gain by the import cargo."<sup>1</sup>

We have already observed much of "the theory and practice of good government" which Sir Thomas Munro's countrymen brought with them to India. Whether they brought also minds free from prejudice and "willing to receive instruction from every quarter" (including the opinions of those over whom they ruled) is very questionable. In Munro's own time there may have been some truth in the statement;<sup>2</sup> but by the end of the nineteenth century the British official who had Indian friends and Munro's respect for Indian institutions had become a rarity.<sup>3</sup>

What is certain is that we can no longer speak of "schools established in every village;" so that however superior the British system of education may have been in the time of

Sir Thomas Munro it was not imparted on a large scale to India. On the contrary, the Indian system of education, at one time universal throughout the Indian villages, has disappeared. The reason for this must be sought in the history of British administration.

In the first chapter of this book we have already observed the illuminating reference made by Sir Charles Metcalfe to the village communities of Northern India. That these communities, so highly eulogised by Metcalfe in 1830, existed in most other parts of the country, is shown in the references made to them by early British administrators. Thus Mountstuart Elphinstone, who for nine years<sup>4</sup> held office as a Commissioner in the Bombay Presidency, wrote in his "Report on the Territories Conquered from the Peshwa":

"In whatever point of view we examine the Native Government in the Deccan, the first and most important feature is, the division into villages or townships. These Communities contain in miniature all the materials of a State within themselves, and are almost sufficient to protect their members, if all other governments are withdrawn. Though probably not compatible with a very good form of government, they are an excellent remedy for the imperfections of a bad one; they prevent the bad effects of its negligence and weakness, and even present some barrier against its tyranny and rapacity."<sup>5</sup>

In this report Elphinstone made a number of recommendations, both positive and negative. He was opposed to any direct attack on Hinduism for an interesting reason. If successful, he said, such an attack upon the religion of the people might be expected "to shake their reverence for all religion and to set them free from those useful restraints which even a superstitious doctrine imposes on the passions."<sup>6</sup> Elphinstone found many defects in the system of administration under the previous rulers of the Deccan, but he also noted that "many of the evils from which this country has hitherto been exempt are inseparable from the introduction of a foreign Government." For, said he,

". . . with all these defects, the Mahratta country flourished, and the people seem to have been exempt

from some of the evils which exist under our more perfect Government. There must, therefore, have been some advantages in the system to counterbalance its obvious defects, and most of them appear to me to have originated in one fact, that the Government, although it did little to obtain justice for the people, left them the means of procuring it for themselves. The advantage of this was particularly felt among the lower orders, who are most out of reach of their rulers, and most apt to be neglected under all Governments. By means of the Panchayat, they were enabled to effect a tolerable dispensation of justice among themselves; and it happens that most of the objections above stated to that institution do not apply in their case. . . .

"I propose, therefore, that the native system should still be preserved, and means taken to remove its abuses and revive its energy. Such a course will be more than welcome to the natives than any entire change. . . .

"Our principal instrument must continue to be the Panchayat, and that must continue to be exempt from all new forms, interference, and regulations on our part."

The *panchayat*, to which Elphinstone refers, was the village council—literally the "Council of Five"—which was the government of these village communities. That Elphinstone's advice was never taken may be attributed to the simple fact that democracy in the villages was completely incompatible with the elaborate despotism of the East India Company and the British Crown.<sup>8</sup> As fresh territories were absorbed, the judicial functions of the village council were usurped by British courts, of which enough has been said already in Chapter V of this book. The village communities ceased to be self-governing because all power and authority, even to the delegated functions of village officials, was vested in the British Government and did not in any way correspond with these primitive institutions. Increasing poverty completed their disintegration and swept away with their schools<sup>9</sup> the last relics of their public services, which had at one time even included the supervision of local irrigation.

In Madras—to take yet another part of the country—the *panchayat* system was probably more developed than in

any other province of British India; and Munro himself laboured for years to preserve the system, only to find himself overborne by the demands of the company's directors.<sup>10</sup> According to the Madras Annual *Epigraphical Reports* an inscription on a temple wall in A.D. 918 tells how six committees were to be elected in a village containing thirty wards. The functions of these committees included the supervision of water supplies and of justice. On the Committee of Justice a woman was to be elected, and rules were laid down showing the methods of election and the qualifications necessary for candidature.

Where a candidate was not elected unanimously or with a sufficiently clear majority by oral acclamation, a ballot was held, slips of coloured wood being used. This ballot was sometimes held publicly, sometimes in secret.<sup>11</sup> In the courts both civil and criminal cases were heard, the defendant being tried by his peers in a very literal sense, since he could only be condemned by fellow-craftsmen of his own caste and occupation.<sup>12</sup> The laws of evidence in use were highly commended by an English Chief Justice of Madras, who wrote of them in the early nineteenth century:

"With some trifling exceptions, the Hindu doctrine of evidence is, for the most part, distinguished nearly as much as our own by the excellent sense that determines the competency and designates the choice of witnesses with the manner of examining, and the credit to be given to them, as well as by the solemn earnestness, with which the obligation of truth is urged and inculcated; insomuch that less cannot be said of this part of their law, than that it will be read by every English lawyer with a mixture of admiration and delight, as it may be studied by him to advantage."<sup>13</sup>

Sir Thomas Munro, in one of his memoranda, compares the system of trial by *panchayat* with the British system of justice which in his days was rapidly replacing it. Of the Indian system he says:

"The strong attachment of the Natives to trial by Panchyet has, no doubt, in some degree arisen from

the dread of the venality of their rulers; but it has probably been increased and confirmed by the conviction, resulting from experience, that no Judge, however upright or active, was so competent as such a body to dispense justly, correctly and expeditiously."<sup>14</sup>

But of the British system Sir Thomas writes:

"It is evident that our present system is not only most expensive and vexatious, but totally inefficient. There are, under the Bengal Government, about one hundred and thirty thousand suits in arrear.<sup>15</sup> These suits will, on a moderate calculation, require a million of witnesses; and if we consider the expense, the distance, and the time they must be absent from their homes, it will not be easy to estimate the amount of injury which the country thereby sustains. But the evil, it has been asserted, is unavoidable, and springs from the litigious spirit of the people of India. Had this been their real character, it would have appeared when they paid nothing for trials. I have had ample opportunity of observing them in every situation, and I can affirm that they are not litigious. I have often been astonished at the facility with which suits among them were settled, and at the fairness with which the losing party acknowledged the claim against him. But when irritated by expense and by delay, it is not surprising that litigation should grow with the progress of the suit through its tedious stages. . . . Our system produce the litigation which we groundlessly impute to the character of the people."

In later years Sir Henry Cotton, looking back upon the process that had uprooted the *panchayat* system, declared that "a costly and mechanical centralisation has taken the place of the former system of local self-government and local arbitration."<sup>16</sup> The consequent destruction of initiative and independence among the Indian peasantry is not the only deplorable result which has followed from this process, but it is ironical that those who claim to be fitting the Indian people for self-government should have set about their task by destroying more democratic institutions than this country has ever produced.<sup>17</sup>

Reference has already been made to the antiquity of this *panchayat* system. Megasthenes, who visited India three centuries before Christ, described the village communities as "republics" which were "almost independent of any outside relations."<sup>18</sup> The village originally owned the land on which the villagers lived and worked; so that before the dislocation of the peasant industries<sup>19</sup> many of these communities had remained, right up to the time of British rule, economically self-contained units. In the North of India, however, a previous succession of rapacious conquerors had already done much to destroy this economic independence, and the *zemindars* or rent collectors of the Moslem rulers were already acquiring something like feudal power in pre-British days.<sup>20</sup>

The *zemindari* system hardened rapidly under British rule. In Bengal the "Permanent Settlement" of 1793 turned these revenue collectors into owners of the soil and confirmed their status as a landed aristocracy.<sup>21</sup> For a hundred and forty years since that time, while the value of money has fallen steadily and the rents of the Bengal peasants have risen in proportion, the tax paid, by the *zemindars* to the Government has remained stationary, fixed for all time by the settlement of 1793. This far-sighted piece of legislation has enabled the landlord class which it created to squeeze enormous sums from the peasants by the payment of a light tax on the proceeds.<sup>22</sup> The effect of this is that whilst the Government gets a smaller share of the spoils than it might expect by direct taxation of the peasantry, it gains a powerful ally in a landlord class the very existence of which is bound up with the continuation of British rule.

To return to the subject of the *panchayat* system, it is interesting to observe how numerous were its functions. It provided against drought and flood, storing grain for times of emergency. It formed a nucleus of social organisation when insurrection became necessary against the oppressions of princes.<sup>23</sup> It provided, as Munro noted in the passage already quoted, a system of primary education such as the country has never enjoyed since.<sup>24</sup> Of this educational system Keir Hardie wrote in his book *India*:



"Max Müller, on the strength of official documents and a Missionary Report concerning Education in Bengal prior to the British occupation, asserts that there were then 80,000 native schools in Bengal, or 1 to every 400 of the population. Ludlow, in his *History of British India*, says that 'In every Hindu village which has retained its old form, I am assured that the children generally are able to read, write and cipher, but where we have swept away the Village System, as in Bengal, there the village school has also disappeared.' That, I think, disposes effectively of the boast that we are *beginning* to give education to the people of India."<sup>25</sup>

An official report of 1812 mentions "the schoolmaster, who is seen teaching the children in the villages to read and write in the sand"<sup>26</sup> among the normal functionaries of an Indian village community. Two years later the Court of Directors of the East India Company itself commended "this venerable and benevolent institution of the Hindus." They said that it had "withstood the shock of revolutions, and to its operation is ascribed the general intelligence of the natives as scribes and accountants."<sup>27</sup>

As late as 1835 much of this ancient system still survived. A Mr. Adams, who conducted an enquiry into the number of schools in Bengal at that time, reported that they still existed "in all the larger villages as in the towns." Of the curriculum he said that it "included reading, writing, the composition of letters, elementary arithmetic and accounts, either commercial or agricultural or both."<sup>28</sup> The same authority estimated the number of these schools in Bengal and Bihar at 100,000 among a population which he put at 40,000,000, giving one school to every 400 persons, which would have made at least as high an average as that which then existed in Great Britain. From this estimate Adams calculated that there was a school for every thirty-two boys and that these schools provided for most of the 150,000 villages through which they were distributed.<sup>29</sup> Whilst admitting his calculations to be only approximate, Mr. Adams concluded that the system of village schools was still "extensively prevalent" and "that the desire to give education to their male children must be deeply

seated in the minds of parents even of the humblest classes."

In commenting upon the schools, and upon the contrast presented by the present illiteracy of the country<sup>30</sup> it is important, however, not to over-emphasise the importance of mere literacy or to confuse it with education. It was the opinion of Max Müller that

"There is such a thing as social education and education outside of books; and this education is distinctly higher in India than in any part of Christendom. Through recitations of ancient stories and legends, through religious songs and passion plays, through shows and pageants, through ceremonials and sacraments, through fairs and pilgrimages, the Hindu masses all over India receive a general culture and education which are in no way lower, but positively higher, than the general level of culture and education received through schools and newspapers, or even through the ministrations of the churches, in Western Christian lands. It is an education, not in the so-called three R's, but in humanity."<sup>31</sup>

This opinion is important to note, in view of the fact that the widespread illiteracy in modern India, which is one of the results of British rule, is so frequently urged to-day as a reason for the inevitable continuation of the system which produced this illiteracy. Whether illiteracy is really more dangerous to self-governing institutions than a capacity to read the *Daily Mail* is, however, extremely debatable; and the present author found every evidence to the contrary.<sup>32</sup> His conclusions were embodied in an article in the *Spectator* a few years ago pointing out that in Canada Lord Durham had revealed widespread illiteracy, also racial and religious conflict, in a report which at the same time had advocated a constitution based upon democratic self-government. The real question raised was whether literacy was not hopelessly over-rated among us as a test of intelligence; and this article concluded: "I submit that it is, and that a traditional culture exists in India, independent of 'book-

learning,' which is a better foundation for self-government than the three R's. In all that pertains to his own affairs I see no reason to regard the Indian villager as in the least inferior to his English counterpart. If England has been governed efficiently by kings who could not even sign their own names, I see no reason to fear for the issue of self-government in India."<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting point about this statement is that it was directly suggested by an illuminating conversation with the late Mr. J. H. Whitley, ex-Speaker of the House of Commons, whom the author met in Calcutta during Mr. Whitley's tour of India with the Labour Commission of 1929-1930. The ex-Speaker, who had been profoundly impressed with the capacity for local self-government shown by Indian peasants, described their discussions as some of the most sensible he had heard, and was responsible for the remark about England being efficiently governed by illiterate kings; though he failed to draw the obvious conclusion that illiterate peasants could manage even better in their own interests.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to notice, before leaving the subject of village self-government, that the *panchayat* "is always viewed as a representative body, and not as a body possessing inherent authority."<sup>35</sup> The popularity of *panchayat* rule, already noted in the writings of Elphinstone, is borne out by the experience of Colonel Sleeman, who found that he could always get the truth more easily from Indian sepoys "in their own village communities, where they state it before their own relations, elders and neighbours, whose esteem is necessary to happiness, and can only be obtained by strict adherence to truth."<sup>36</sup> On the competence of these institutions we have, in addition to the evidence already cited, the testimony of Sir John Lawrence in 1864 that "the people of India are quite capable of administering their own affairs and the municipal feeling is deeply rooted in them. The village communities, each of which is a little republic, are the most abiding of Indian institutions."<sup>37</sup> Similar opinions have been expressed by numerous administrators at different times

However, as Emerson said, "The Englishman sticks to his traditions and usages, and, so help him God, he will force his island by-laws down the throat of great countries. . . ." <sup>38</sup> The report of the Decentralisation Commission, appointed in 1907, mentioned that "the village still remains the first unit of administration," spoke of the village officials "utilised and paid by Government" and even mentioned the continued existence of *panchayats* "completely under the eye and hand of the district authorities." As Mrs. Besant points out, "the words *paid by Government* mark the gulf between the English and Indian village systems," whilst the supervision referred to is the negation of real autonomy.

It has been necessary to consider this subject at length in order to explain the principal deficiency in the present social organisation of India; and in turning to the existing conditions of village life this fact must be continually borne in mind. (The village of to-day bears in many other respects the closest resemblance to the villages of ancient India. Neither the skill of the artisan nor his implements have greatly changed, for poverty compels him to use the most primitive tools. The potter still fashions his shapely earthenware upon a wheel which is little more than a spinning-top. With its axle in a slight hollow made in the hard ground he spins his wheel with the left hand while he builds up the pot with his right. The carpenter works at a lathe that is made of two sticks, driven into the earth. Fixed between them upon two spikes is the wood upon which he is working, turned by a bowstring. He holds the bow in his right hand, twisting the string round the wood. With his left hand and his toes, as he squats upon the ground, he directs his chisel, and with amazing rapidity produces work as fine as the most expensive lathes in this country can display. The delicate ivory carvings which so often amaze Europeans are cut with tools as simple and primitive.<sup>39</sup>)

(Agriculture has changed as little. With the decline of village industries the pressure upon the land has increased, and individual holdings have grown smaller, but the system is essentially unchanged. So much has been said

on this subject that it is perhaps desirable to note the views of two expert authorities on the cause of this "backwardness" of Indian agriculture. As early as 1832 Dr. Wallick, at that time Superintendent of the East India Company's Botanical Garden at Calcutta, pointed out that the problem was commonly misunderstood by Europeans. He instanced the introduction of European iron ploughs into Bengal as a supposed improvement, and pointed out that owing to the superficiality of the soil those iron ploughs mingled the upper with the under soil, so that its quality deteriorated.<sup>40</sup>

(Even more important was the evidence of Dr. Voelcker, Consulting Chemist to the Royal Agricultural Society of England in 1889. Having been sent to India to investigate the problems of Indian agriculture he reported that:

"On one point there can be no question, viz., that the ideas generally entertained in England, and often given expression to even in India, that Indian agriculture is, as a whole, primitive and backward, and that little has been done to try and remedy it, are altogether erroneous. . . . At his best the Indian ryot is quite as good as, and in some respects the superior of, the average British farmer; whilst at his worst, it can only be said that this state is brought about largely by an absence of facilities for improvement which is probably unequalled in any other country, and that the ryot will struggle on patiently and uncomplainingly in the face of difficulties in a way that no one else would.

"Nor need our British farmers be surprised at what I say, for it must be remembered that the natives of India were cultivators of wheat centuries before we in England were. It is not likely, therefore, that their *practice* should be capable of much improvement. What does, however, prevent them from growing larger crops is the limited facilities to which they have access, such as the supply of water and manure. But, to take the ordinary acts of husbandry, nowhere would one find better instances of keeping land scrupulously clean from weeds, of ingenuity in the device of water-raising appliances, of knowledge of soils and their capabilities, as well as the exact time to sow and to reap, as one would

in Indian agriculture, and this not at its best alone, but at its ordinary level. It is wonderful, too, how much is known of rotation, the system of mixed crops and of fallowing. Certain it is that I, at least, have never seen a more perfect picture of careful cultivation, combined with hard labour, perseverance, and fertility of resource, than I have seen in many of the halting places in my tour."<sup>41</sup>)

This quotation brings us back once more to the fact that it is from no lack of knowledge or skill, but from the conditions under which he lives that the Indian peasant suffers. An instance indicated by Dr. Voelcker is that of manure, of which there is a great shortage, owing to the prevalence among Indian peasants of the habit of using cow-dung for fuel.<sup>42</sup> This is not, as is commonly supposed, a matter of ignorance or wilful waste, but a matter of necessity. The value of cow-dung as manure is about three times its value as fuel;<sup>43</sup> but as the Forest Laws make it illegal for the peasant even to collect a few twigs from the forests, his manure is the only fuel available. However near he may be to forest land, he must pay for wood, and this he cannot afford to do.<sup>44</sup> Consequently he burns his cow-dung, though he knows its value, simply because it is the only fuel that he can obtain without paying for it.

To meet this problem Dr. Voelcker recommended the revival of the fodder reserves which had been a special feature during the régime of Akbar. Nothing was done by the authorities, however, till 1912, when the United Provinces Government outlined afforestation schemes which included village plantations. The fact that such schemes have yet to be extensively applied so as to benefit the country as a whole may be once more attributed to the decay of the one institution which would have been competent to carry the schemes out efficiently. Meanwhile the restriction of fuel continues, with its devastating results; and it is not without reason that the Gonds of Central India speak to-day of "the *Kali Yug*, the Age of Darkness, that began when Government took the forest from us."<sup>45</sup>

A normal feature of village life is debt, the average rate of interest being between 30 per cent and 40 per cent.<sup>46</sup> The money-lender enjoys a protection to-day such as no previous régime afforded him, for the general prevalence of law and order has almost put an end to the ancient custom of assaulting and despoiling the usurer who oppressed a village beyond endurance.<sup>47</sup> The money-lenders, like the landlords, have consequently become the staunch allies of the Government; for (as Mr. Brailsford expresses it) "the usurer felt that its strong right arm sustained him in his right."<sup>48</sup> In Dr. Manshardt's words the money-lender is "one of the most hated men in India."

In the *ryotwari* districts, where there are no big landlords, but direct payment from the peasants to the Government, "settlements" are made periodically by which the revenue is re-assessed.<sup>49</sup> Fifty per cent of the rental value was the maximum laid down in 1924 by the Governor of Bombay for the guidance of revenue officials; and experience has proved that such an assessment, even where it is not exceeded in practice, leaves the cultivator miserably poor. The *zemindari* system, already mentioned, is even more oppressive in its results.

"Pressing upon the people of India in a manner to produce great distress is the land tax, in addition to which is the water tax in the irrigated areas. The land tax keeps the mass of the population in a state bordering upon slavery. Millions cannot get sufficient food. At the end of his year of labour, the farmer finds his crop divided between the landlord and the government. He has to go into debt to the village shopkeeper, getting credit for food and seed in the ensuing year. Since 240,000,000 people in India are connected directly or indirectly with agriculture, this means that a large majority of them, probably two-thirds, are living in a state of squalor."<sup>50</sup>

Such is the opinion of a distinguished American authority, who points out also that

"The rural people, who form three-fourths of the population . . . are without representation in the legislative bodies, and have no way of expressing their

grievances. The revenues are not employed to suit their local needs. Great irrigation works and railroads are built and harbours are improved, but the lot of the farmer is unchanged."<sup>51</sup>

In addition to their human oppressors the peasants have in many parts of the country to contend with wild beasts which destroy their crops and frequently attack the people themselves. So carefully and effectively have the peasants been disarmed by the Government that, whilst a big landlord may have a whole arsenal of weapons at his disposal, it is possible to pass through any number of villages without finding a single man who is licensed to carry a gun.<sup>52</sup> Consequently the villagers are helpless to cope with this problem, and whilst incalculable damage is done to their farms there is also a considerable loss of life. In the year 1935 villages in the Allahabad district were ravaged by wolves which carried off children and attacked men and women.<sup>53</sup> During the same year 1,352 men, women and children were killed by wild beasts in the jungles of Central India.<sup>54</sup>

Probably, however, the worst pest that afflicts the Indian peasant is the policeman.<sup>55</sup> The terror which the police inspire can best be understood by taking as an example Sections 109 and 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code, from which some conception may be formed of the powers wielded by a force whose name is a by-word for corruption.

These provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code are, technically speaking, concerned with the prevention, and not the punishment, of crime, and they begin with the very plausible assumption that a bad character should be kept under supervision. Theoretically a man cannot be "convicted" or "punished" under either of these sections. He is just kept out of mischief. The United Provinces Government Handbook on "The Practical Application of the Bad Livelihood Sections"<sup>56</sup> states clearly that "Sections 109 and 110 are entirely preventive measures."

To take first Section 110, as by far the more interesting of the two, it is designed to keep in check the "Badmash"—the bad character, that is to say. No specific charge need



be proved against the individual. The necessary evidence has been summed up in the Handbook quoted above as (A) Reputation, and (B) Disposition.

The following "widely accepted ruling" is given in this Government Handbook as a definition of Reputation:

"Reputation is founded on the general opinion of the neighbourhood in which the bad character lives. It is not necessary that the evidence should show that such general opinion is based on the personal knowledge of the man by his neighbours generally or that such general opinion has been publicly expressed by his neighbours. If a witness is asked what the man's character is and he were to say that in the general opinion of the man's neighbours the man is an habitual thief, the statement is evidence of general repute." (Dunia Singh v. the King Emperor, 50. c203).

The Handbook adds:

"It is not necessary that the witness should give instances of the person's bad character to justify this opinion or that he should specify the sources of his information so long as he says that this is the general opinion expressed by people about the accused."

A later quotation from the same authority gives further interesting information regarding "Evidence of Reputation":

*"Notwithstanding a ruling of the Bombay High Court to the contrary rumour cannot be held to be an evidence of repute."*<sup>57</sup>

The cat is already out of the bag. We have here a law which can be pleasantly adapted to suit the discretion (or indiscretion) of those who administer it. According to taste you may accept the opinion in the U.P. Government Handbook or the more liberal provisions offered by the Bombay High Court.

Evidence under the second heading of "disposition" turns upon what are called "specific instances." It is considered a "specific instance" of a man's character that

he should have been *suspected* by the police in their investigation of some criminal case.<sup>58</sup> In the nature of things one may assume that the suspicion could not be proved, or the accused would be standing his trial on a different charge. The author of the Government Handbook doubts whether it is generally advisable to prosecute a person only once suspected, but adds: "Generally, however, a second suspicion on good grounds should be enough to satisfy the police officer of the guilt of a bad character." The "bad character" of the accused is, incidentally, the very point which is to be proved!

Another "specific instance" of disposition is "Association with other bad characters." On this subject the Handbook says: "This association can be proved by witnesses who have seen the accused in association (*it may be in perfectly innocent acts*)<sup>59</sup> with others who are known to be bad characters." It really is a pity that the Pharisees and Scribes had no Section 110, for it is clear that eating with publicans and sinners would come "within the meaning of the Act." It would also have been a splendid measure for dealing with an Elizabeth Fry or a General Booth.

But this is not all: "Assumed association can be proved by simultaneous absences, especially valuable if they can be shown to refer to occasions when offences have occurred." The latter condition is evidently not essential. The law has no intention of allowing even for coincidences. The argument now runs: "You left the town last week on the same day as A and both returned yesterday. A is a bad character, so you must be another!" Doubtless the usual case is not quite so palpably foolish as this. But this is the backbone of the deduction; and if only one possible case in a thousand is taken up, *the selection is in the hands of the police.*<sup>60</sup>

As to the actual conduct of these cases, the Government Handbook itself makes some significant admissions, and one illuminating extract may well be quoted in full:

"Anything to the discredit of the accused, whether relevant or not, *often whether true or not*, is put forward

as evidence against him. No attempt is made to see that the evidence is in accord with the particular bad character ascribed to the accused in the charge. Reputation so-called is frequently mere hearsay or rumour, or less; frequently it is confused with evidence of disposition. *Ipse dixit* of police officers are accepted as evidence of reputation and specific instances. No one connected with these cases can say that it is an exaggeration of what actually occurs, and it is indeed a matter for surprise that *in spite of these defects the large majority of these cases end in conviction.*"<sup>61</sup>

Whatever individual cases may be cited to the contrary, one could hardly wish for a clearer proof, especially from such a source, of the accepted maxim—more true in India than elsewhere—that it is the magistrate's recognised business to back up the police.<sup>62</sup> But the author of the Handbook realises that the backing has become too obvious, and in the next paragraph appeals to the police to pull their weight:

"Will not the anticipated divorce of executive and judicial functions be the death-knell to success in preventive action if improvement is to be achieved?

*"Do not magistrates frequently, with a realisation of their own responsibility, rescue cases from hopeless failure by acting practically the rôle of prosecuting counsel in their own courts? Do they not also frequently convict on bad evidence and incoherent date, which would not for a moment stand the lime-light of appeal or revision? Salvation lying so often in the absence of appeal."*<sup>63</sup>

Here is the plainest insinuation in a Government publication that magistrates frequently help the police out of an awkward corner by convicting on bad evidence, and that the whole business is only possible because the wretched prisoner is either too poor or too ignorant—or perhaps too much intimidated—to appeal. However, as the Handbook points out in the next paragraph. "It must be allowed that on paper results are good." Or in other words, there is a thriving trade in these cases.

The refinements of legal procedure in India are aptly

illustrated by a reference in the Handbook to a standing order in one district "directing that all persons acquitted in dacoity cases<sup>64</sup> should be re-arrested under this section." Comment here is hardly necessary. The police are not to be balked of their prey, and a second string is provided for their bow.

It should in fairness be mentioned that the law allows the accused to produce witnesses to his good character and attempt to refute the charges brought against him. These witnesses, however, must possess certain qualifications, and the list given in the Handbook is significantly headed by "Social Standing." As there is no intermediate class between the *zemindars* and the peasants, this is liable to throw the peasant or labourer on the mercy of his landlord, who has no interest in defending his tenants, but every interest in keeping on the right side of the police.

Section 109 is less vague in its provisions than Section 110, and even resembles in some respects the English Vagrancy Acts (as the author of the Handbook is at pains to point out). It is designed to deal with suspicious characters, persons "without ostensible means of subsistence" and persons concealing themselves "with a view to commit a cognizable offence." Two extracts from our authority will indicate the uses and abuses of this Section.

In the first the author of the Handbook is speaking of common "misunderstandings" on the part of the police, and writes:

"It is to be feared that frequently the police embellish their story of arrest."

When so much hangs upon the veracity of police witnesses this is scarcely a reassuring statement to read. For in a later paragraph we have the following statement:

"We have seen that for the proper conduct of a Section 110 case, considerable thought and care are necessary; but in cases under this section *little more than formal evidence of the circumstances of arrest is sufficient* to make out a case for binding over the person sent up. *Indeed, there is no reason why in the majority of cases the police themselves should not provide the evidence required.*"<sup>65</sup>

The reader will notice that the Handbook speaks here of "a case for binding over the person sent up." The implication of this guileless phrase must now be examined.

The Handbook reiterates the purely "preventive" nature of these sections, yet on the very first page we read that the object is to "bind him (the prisoner) over to behave himself, or (*as more often happens*) in default of the necessary security, to send him to jail." The phrase italicised should be read with due regard to the extreme poverty of the Indian peasant and the necessity, once more, for "Social Status" and "pecuniary fitness" among the qualifications of an adequate surety.

The "preventive" measure is then further detailed as follows:

"If the accused fails to find sureties or to execute his bond, he can be committed to jail and serve out his term there, undergoing simple or rigorous imprisonment."

This particular statement, it should be noted, refers solely to Section 110. Under Section 109 the prisoner can only be sentenced to simple imprisonment.

It will be strange news, however, to those who have studied the art of preventing crime to learn that this object is to be achieved by arresting "suspects" and imprisoning them in the common jails. The argument is peculiarly farcical in the case of "rigorous imprisonment," which is the punishment meted out to the worst criminals, under conditions that make our "hard labour" look mild indeed.<sup>66</sup> Persons convicted under Section 110 may be imprisoned for a maximum of three years, the longest period in the case of Section 109 being twelve months.

Finally, the author of the Handbook, patently conscious of the defects in the system, laments that the jail must replace the workhouse "until the march of civilisation creates these more humane agencies for dealing with the nuisance of vagrants." And the reader is left wondering how long the Government will wait for "the march of civilisation "

Further quotations are unnecessary in order to establish the extraordinary nature of these laws, together with the dangerous powers they give to the police and the undoubted abuse of those powers. In England a jealous watch is kept on police authority; but in India, where the temptation of the police is enhanced by the poverty and helplessness of the peasants, there is little or no check on them. On the contrary, the man who dares, in spite of the odds against him, to take action in the courts against the police is almost sure, if he loses his case, to be promptly tried for perjury.<sup>67</sup>

In no country in the world have the police such a bad name as they have in India.<sup>68</sup> Almost every Indian that one meets has at least one personal experience of their corruption. In the nature of the case they are, in fact, so far as the Indian members of the Service are concerned, composed of the worst types of men who are content to be the tools of an alien government in whatever oppressive measures it may choose to execute against their fellow-countrymen.<sup>69</sup> Such being their reputation, most of them would fare ill if they had to stand their trial under Section 110. It may be said that the reputation of the police is undeserved, but Section 110 makes no provision for undeserved reputation; and if this measure were fairly administered, almost the entire police force would soon be in jail. But there is no attempt made at the systematic administration of these measures. The chief use of a bad law is that it can be held over the heads of individuals as a means of coercion. Injustice cannot be impartially administered, for that is not its purpose, and the net effect of the powers enjoyed by the police is to place every village in India at the mercy of an intolerable tyranny.

No account of the evils which afflict the Indian villages would be complete without some reference to forced labour and the habit, common to most officials when travelling through the country, of obtaining food and other necessities from the peasants without payment. The worst victims of such practices are always the most primitive peoples, such as the Gonds, of whom Mr. Verrier Elwin writes:

"If the Gonds had the franchise, any politician, of whatever political complexion, could be elected if he promised to right this evil."<sup>70</sup>

Mr. Elwin recounts how a whole tribe of Baigas abandoned their trade of making baskets because so many were taken from them by officials on the way to market that this subsidiary industry ceased to pay. In his own experience when Mr. Elwin sought to encourage the planting of fruit trees the villagers said to him "*What is the use? When the fruit is ripe, the police will take it away from us.*" No more poignant example could be cited of the fatalistic despair which replaced the independent spirit of the old village communities. This fatalism still rules the lives of the primitive people of whom Mr. Elwin was writing; but throughout the greater part of India a new force has been at work, the origin, nature and history of which it is our next task to examine.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Evidence on the Affairs of the East India Company (1813). Quoted by Max Müller in *India, What Can It Teach Us?* (p. 62.)

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1853, however, a former judge and ex-member of the Indian Board of Revenue told a Parliamentary Committee of "the strong feeling of dislike on the part of the ruling race in India to the people who are ruled over" (Commons Report of 1853. Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 188).

<sup>3</sup> See Thompson's *History of India*, p. 68. Mr. J. C. Curry in his book on *The Indian Police* (London, 1932) remarks that British officers in earlier times "tended to become either definitely Hinduised or definitely Muslimised in cultural sympathies" and that "as late as the 'nineties there were rare survivals who had taken Mahommedan wives." He points out that the earlier officials were often interested in "Sanskrit literature or Arabic learning" but that closer contact with Britain has meant less contact with Indian cultural influences. Real race prejudice as we understand it to-day probably began with the wholesale introduction of English women into a society where they could only breed neurosis. The wish-fulfilment of the typical "mem-sahib"—that every Indian desires to rape her—has been the mother of many atrocities, though most Indians find English women very unattractive.

<sup>4</sup> 1818-1827.

<sup>5</sup> Submitted to the Governor-General in October, 1819. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 346-352.

<sup>6</sup> This was long the guiding principle of the East India Company in religious matters; for which reason they refused to allow missionaries

to operate freely till 1813, when the early Evangelicals succeeded in inserting a missionary clause into the Company's Charter by Act of Parliament. This was the beginning of the epoch of biblical imperialism noted in Chapter V of this book. A few missionaries had been allowed in India in previous years, but they were discouraged by the Company, which strictly limited their sphere of action. Wilberforce, in his Parliamentary speech on the Act of 1813, quoted Burke as having said of the Europeans in his time that "they were commonly unbaptised on the passage to India." (See Mill, Vol VII, pp. 339-344 and 388-401.)

<sup>7</sup> Elphinstone says: "The number was never less than five, but it has been known to be as great as fifty." (Quoted by Wilson; Mill, Vol VIII, p. 277.)

<sup>8</sup> In modern times the Provincial Governments have in some cases endeavoured to resuscitate these *panchayats*; but upon such a subservient basis, with such limited powers and oppressed by so much patronage that they have been doomed from the start and hailed with considerable satisfaction in many quarters as manifest failures.

<sup>9</sup> Mr. John Matthai in *Village Government in British India* shows that the taxation of school lands helped in this process of disintegration, where education was concerned.

<sup>10</sup> Of Munro's efforts Dutt writes that "all these endeavours failed. When all real power is taken away from old institutions, forms of authority will not keep them alive. And the villagers, harassed by every petty revenue officer and corrupt policeman, could no longer work together as corporate bodies, as they had done before. Among the many changes which India has witnessed with the advent of British rule, many of them making for progress and advancement, and some of them deplorable, the saddest change is the virtual extinction of the old forms of self-government, and the disappearance of those ancient Village Communities of which India was the first home among all the countries of the earth." (Dutt, Vol I, pp. 151-2.)

In view of the evidence quoted in this chapter the reader may be interested to know that the article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on Village Communities does not so much as mention those of India!

<sup>11</sup> These facts are given as summarized from the *Epigraphical Reports* by Mrs. Besant in *India: Bond or Free?*

<sup>12</sup> The absence of either capital punishment or judicial torture in the Indian Courts was noted as early as the fifth century by a Chinese traveller, named Fa Hian, who is quoted in the first chapter of this book. Ovington notes the rarity of capital punishment even under the Mughals in the seventeenth century (*Voyage to Suratt*, London, 1696).

<sup>13</sup> *Elements of Hindu Law*, by Sir Thomas Strange, p. 309. Quoted by H. H. Wilson in a footnote to Mill's *History of British India*, Vol I, p. 190. Mill himself, as Horace Wilson shows, is both inaccurate and unfair in his chapter on the Laws of the Hindus. These laws had many faults; but in that respect they were not unique.

<sup>14</sup> *East India Papers*, Vol II, pp. 116-8 (London, 1820). Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 322.

Wilson, quoting Elphinstone, says that "the Panchayat must have exercised a beneficial influence, as it enjoyed great popularity; as is



proved by the current phrase 'Panch-Parameswra,' Panchayat is God Almighty." (Mill, Vol VII, p. 278.)

<sup>15</sup> Terrible evidence regarding these delays was quoted by Sir Henry Strachey in 1820. In one case that he mentioned 192 persons were arrested on suspicion after a robbery. Of these 46 were kept in irons for over a year. Three died and the rest were proved innocent at the trial. (See Dutt, Vol I, pp. 320-1.)

<sup>16</sup> *New India*, by Sir Henry Cotton, a former Chief Commissioner of Assam. Sir Henry held that "the people of India possess an instinctive capacity for self-government."

<sup>17</sup> Speaking of India, Mr. Bernard Houghton (a retired member of the I.C.S.) says: "In some respects, particularly in its village organisation, its civilisation is more democratic and better than ours." (Quoted by Dr. Sunderland in *India in Bondage*.)

<sup>18</sup> *Brief History of the Indian People*, by Sir W. W. Hunter. Megasthenes also noted the complete absence of slavery in India at a time when slavery was a common institution in the West.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter IV.

<sup>20</sup> Sir Henry Maine in *Village Communities in East and West* (5th Edition of 1890, p. 140), traces the growth of landlordism under Mughal and British rule.

<sup>21</sup> This was the work of Lord Cornwallis, whose name is blessed to this day by the Indian upper classes. Dutt eulogises the Permanent Settlement in almost every reference which he makes to it. Of the communal ownership of land H. H. Wilson says: "A peculiarity in the disposition of landed property in India which was early observable was its distribution among communities rather than among individuals." (Mill, Vol VII, p. 301.) Wilson quotes the ancient Hindu code of Manu in proof of the antiquity of this communal ownership.

<sup>22</sup> For further comments on this system see Horace Alexander's *Indian Ferment* (London, 1929), pp. 185-6, also Brailsford's *Rebel India*, (London, 1931), pp. 132-5. Reference will be made to the system in Chapter XI.

The Simon Report also noted the fact the big *Zemindar* under the Permanent Settlement "owns extensive estates for which he may pay to the State a merely nominal charge fixed over a century ago and declared to be unalterable forever, while his agricultural income is totally exempt from income tax." (Our italics.)

<sup>23</sup> It would appear that Kings in the earliest times were not regarded as absolute monarchs in India, any more than the early Kings of England were before the Norman Conquest. Lord Ronaldshay (now Marquis of Zetland) brings out this fact in *India: A Bird's Eye View*. (See pp. 137-8.)

<sup>24</sup> Dutt (Vol II, p. 203) quotes both Munro and Elphinstone as having reported "that elementary education had been much more diffused in India from time immemorial than it had been in Europe." He also cites the evidence of Sir Erskine Perry in the Lords' Second Report of 1853.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Besant in *India: Bond or Free?* pp. 113-14. The authorities referred to are quoted in greater detail on p. 62 of Müller's *India, What Can It Teach Us?*

<sup>26</sup> Fifth Report of 1812. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 118. The report contains a fine eulogy of the "simple form of municipal government" in the Indian village.

<sup>27</sup> Despatch of June 3rd, 1814, quoted in *India: Bond or Free?* (p. 114). The despatch urged support for the native system of education, but (as Mrs. Besant points out) three years later the Company struck at its basis by measures which destroyed village autonomy.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Besant *India: Bond or Free?* p. 117.

<sup>29</sup> Adams' Reports on Vernacular Education, 1835. His calculation of the number of boys appears to have been based (in the absence of census figures) on the assumption that out of every 400 persons 200 would be adults. If half the remaining 200 were girls, for whom no such universal system of education existed at that time (either in India or elsewhere) that would leave 100 boys, of whom about one-third would be of an age for primary education—i.e. between five and eleven years of age.

<sup>30</sup> There are to-day, according to the 1931 census, about 12½ million literate adults in British India out of a total adult population of over 130 million—i.e., less than 10 per cent of the population, over twenty years of age. These figures compare very badly with the Indian states of Cochin and Baroda; whilst in Travancore the figures for female education show a higher percentage of literacy than the percentage of educated males in British India. (See 1931 census, Part I.)

<sup>31</sup> *India, What Can It Teach Us?* by Max Müller. The Baüls of Bengal afford perhaps the best example of this unlettered culture, on which a most illuminating article was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* of January, 1929. The Baüls have a close cultural affinity with the teachings of Kabir.

<sup>32</sup> It may usefully be noted that even under the existing Constitution a higher percentage of the electorate votes in illiterate India than in educated England. Sir Samuel Hoare noted this in a particular instance, the "backward" North-West Frontier province, where the percentage of polling was higher in 1932 than it was in a contemporary by-election in Marylebone. (*The Times*, April 30th, 1932.)

<sup>33</sup> *Spectator*, August 2nd, 1930. This article also drew a sharp distinction between democracy and the particular form of Parliamentary Government which Western people commonly confuse with it. It pointed out that if our Parliamentary Government could be called democratic at all, it was certainly not the only conceivable form for a democracy, and highly unsuited to the needs of India, which had its own democratic tradition. The article was quoted at length by Sir Donald Cameron, at that time Governor of Tanganyika, in a Memorandum on Native Administration; and it is interesting to note that Sir Donald evidently considered that the same principles had a direct bearing upon African problems.

<sup>34</sup> It is significant that Gandhi, at the Round Table Conference, declared that if India chose her own Constitution it would be a Federation of Village Republics. (See *Young India*, Oct. 8th, 1931.)

<sup>35</sup> *Village Communities*, by Sir Henry Maine. (p. 122.)

<sup>36</sup> Quoted from Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollections*, by Mrs. Besant in *India: Bond or Free?* Mrs. Besant gives a similar quotation from Mr. A. D. Campbell, I.C.S.

W. M. Torrens, in *Empire in Asia*, paid the highest tribute to the democratic character of the village communities and to their system of justice. He noted that the British system which replaced them was by comparison arbitrary, obscure and unpopular, and that the British judges were ignorant of the customs and languages of the people.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted by Mrs. Besant in *India: Bond or Free?* (p. 54). Mrs. Besant also quotes Sir Bartle Frere who wrote in 1871 that it was "an expression of the genius of the people, as it was of the old Saxons, to gather together in assemblies of different types to vote by tribes or hundreds." Mr. Chisholm Anstey said that local self-government "is as old as the East itself." Sir Herbert Risley described the electoral procedure of the Indian village community as "the oldest mode of election in the world."

<sup>38</sup> This remark of Emerson's was quoted by Lord Ronaldshay in *India, A Bird's Eye View*, with the comment that "the authorities of the day went a long way towards justifying that somewhat caustic criticism." Ronaldshay also remarked that "Existing institutions are, to a considerable degree, alien from the spirit of the people." As Secretary of State for India he has been very silent on this subject, however.

<sup>39</sup> The description given here of the Indian potter and the carpenter's lathe are from the author's recollections of seeing these craftsmen at work in the Central Provinces. The skill of the potter is perhaps the more amazing, as anyone who has attempted to make pots on a perfectly balanced wheel will realise. The distinguished Indian scientist Sir Jagadis Bose, after demonstrating some of his remarkable experiments to the author in London a few years ago, remarked that he had in vain endeavoured to find craftsmen in this country or on the Continent who could make the sensitive apparatus which he was using. In Bengal he had given lectures on "Biology" to his artisans, with the result that they were not only making perfect apparatus for his use, but doing similar experiments themselves!

<sup>40</sup> Evidence given before the Commons Committee in 1832. (Vol II, Part I, p. 195.) Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 277.

<sup>41</sup> *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* by Dr. Voelcker. Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, pp. 277-8.

<sup>42</sup> Mr. M. D. Chaturvedi, I.F.S., in an interesting article in *The Indian Forester* (April, 1930), pointed out that "the villager . . . is fully aware of the fact that cow-dung is more valuable as manure than fuel, although he has no pretensions to the knowledge of its chemical constituents." Mr. Chaturvedi instanced the case of villagers in the district of Budaun who were given free fuel by the Raja of Pilibhit. They "saved their cow-dung for manure and reaped a harvest they had never known before."

<sup>43</sup> This does not take into account the further question, elucidated by the Royal Commission on Agriculture, that no artificial manure really replaces farmyard manure, even if the villager could afford to buy the former. According to a memorandum submitted to the Royal

Commission by Lt.-Col. R. McCarrison, officer in charge of the Deficiency Diseases Enquiry, animal manures contain organic substances known as "auximones," which are as necessary to plant life as vitamins are to animal life. Hence wheat grown without animal manure receives a deficiency of "auximones" and contains as a result a deficiency of vitamins, even if the same weight of wheat can be produced by artificial manuring. Over a protracted period the cumulative effect of destroying cow-dung is therefore to bring down the vitamin content of food-grains to the point where Deficiency Diseases are the inevitable result.

<sup>44</sup> Wilfred Scawen Blunt in *India Under Ripon* (pp. 241-2) shows other evil effects of the Forestry Laws. No government before the British restricted the free gathering of fuel.

<sup>45</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, by Verrier Elwin. (London, 1936.)

<sup>46</sup> Many authorities give a much higher figure. e.g. Dr. Manshardt, who mentions 75 per cent as a "Common rate." (*The Hindu Muslim Problem*, p. 58.)

<sup>47</sup> Mr. J. C. Curry says of the Bhils in Central India that they still "regard it as something of a joke to form a gang and rob a fat trader or money-lender." (*The Indian Police*, p. 42.) But on a later page he explains that the Bhils are being gradually converted into policemen.

<sup>48</sup> *Rebel India* (London, 1931), p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Roughly speaking, Bombay, the Punjab and Madras may be called *ryotwari* provinces, whilst Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces are predominantly *zamindari*.

<sup>50</sup> *The New World* (Problems in Political Geography), by Isaiah Bowman, Ph.D., Director of the American Geographical Society of New York. (London, 1926.) Section on India, p. 52. On the same page Mr. Bowman remarks that "the policy of centralization of the work of the Indian Office has been carried to a high state of inefficiency" —a statement which once more bears upon the problem of village self-government versus central bureaucracy.

<sup>51</sup> *The New World*, p. 51.

The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (Abridged Report, p. 56), points out that "in the olden days tanks were dug or cleaned out, wells sunk and roads made or repaired by corporate action of the villagers." The destruction of local self-government has put an end to such activities in most parts.

<sup>52</sup> The present author visited the palace of a big landowner in the United Provinces who had about 200 guns of various descriptions. Nearby wolves had been recently killing the children of villagers who had nothing with which to protect them. Many of the police carry arms, but these are for a better purpose. The armed police are in effect an army for use against the people, and they are "always in the firing line" as Lord Lloyd says in his preface to Curry's *Indian Police*.

<sup>53</sup> *Daily Herald*, Feb. 12th, 1935. Gandhi's demand in 1930 for arms licenses under popular control was directly related to this problem of unprotected villages.

<sup>54</sup> *Daily Express*, June 10th, 1936. It is only fair to comment that the *Express* compared this figure with 6,521 men, women and children killed on British roads during the same year, though there is as yet no

proposal for licenses under popular control to shoot motorists. (In Afghanistan the relatives of a man killed by a car are, very properly, allowed by law to kill the driver.)

<sup>55</sup> Among the Gonds of Central India the latest research indicates that their dream-life is pre-occupied with fear and anxiety, the latter inspired mainly by hunger and the former by terror of the police. In the dream symbolism of these primitive people the policeman (so the Gonds say) is represented by a bear—the *only animal which attacks without provocation*. The evidence with regard to this matter will, it is hoped, be published within the next few years.

<sup>56</sup> Published by the Superintendent, Government Press, for the use of Police Officers and Magistrates in the U.P. This book was privately circulated and the present author was fortunate ever to have seen it. The actual power enjoyed by the police is by no means confined to that which is conferred upon them legally. It used to be said in India that the British courts provided justice between Indian and Indian, between Englishman and Englishman, but not between English and Indians. To-day it is more generally said that there is justice as between the governing and official classes, also between the non-official and oppressed classes, but never between the Government or its employees and the people. The chance of any court case going against a policeman, or any other Government employee, is extremely small. Hence the vast extra-legal powers which the police exert in practice. It need hardly be added that the police are never known to take action against an Englishman (or an Indian of the wealthy or official classes) who injures or insults a peasant.

<sup>57</sup> Our italics.

<sup>58</sup> As an example of the operation of Section 110, the case of Santin-dranath Sen, a well-known political figure in Bengal, is instructive. During the War he was interned by order of a secret tribunal for causes unstated; and after the War when charged (and sentenced to a year's imprisonment) under Section 110, his previous internment was among the "evidence" which the prosecution produced to prove his "bad character."

<sup>59</sup> Our italics.

<sup>60</sup> According to the Handbook, one "specific instance" of evil disposition is "sleeping by day when others are working." It is to be hoped that the police keep a close eye on British officers and others addicted to a mid-day siesta.

<sup>61</sup> Our italics.

<sup>62</sup> See Dutt, Vol II, pp. 195-6, on the corruption of the police and the combination of executive with judicial functions.

<sup>63</sup> Our italics. The use to which this is put by the police is illustrated by Mr. Horace Alexander in *The Indian Ferment* (p. 234), where he tells how a police inspector threatened to blackmail an Indian in the Central Provinces merely by charging him with some robberies committed in the district. Similar cases are known to the present author.

<sup>64</sup> i.e., robbery with violence.

<sup>65</sup> Our italics. It should be remembered that promotion for the police depends, as in many other countries, on "results" (i.e. the number of

convictions obtained). Mr. Verrier Elwin was actually informed by a Sub. Inspector that he had been told to "get up a good political case" if he wanted promotion. (Circular letter, dated July 2nd, 1934.)

<sup>66</sup> In a lecture on "Imprisonment and Detention in India," Lt.-Col. W. G. Hamilton (late Inspector-General of Prisons in Bengal) informed the East India Association in 1930 that convicts were still used as warders, and even placed in charge of prisoners under trial. "The system," he said, "of placing presumably innocent men awaiting trial under the charge of convicted criminals is obviously indefensible." The Government nevertheless continued it, pleading lack of funds. (*Journal of the East India Association*, July, 1930.)

Floggings are frequent, and are generally administered by convicts. Accusations of torture are equally common, though necessarily difficult to substantiate. Sir Alexander Cardew, ex-President of the All-India Gaol Committee, admitted in a lecture to the East India Association on October 22nd, 1923, that Indian prisons were "even more than the prisons of the other civilised countries" a means of deterioration.

<sup>67</sup> For a study of the actual operation of British justice in India the reader should consider the implications of the early chapters in Colonel Osburn's book *Must England Lose India?* (London, 1930).

<sup>68</sup> The following conversation, which took place between a Judge's wife and the wife of a Settlement Commissioner (both English) was overheard by the present author at a tea-party in the United Provinces. "Did you hear," said the first lady, "that one of their beaters died of sunstroke and two were killed by a tiger? But none of the party were hurt—weren't they lucky!" To this the other lady replied: "Yes, but won't it make it rather hard to get beaters there next time?" This conversation was repeated to an Indian in Government Service, who remarked: "They will get beaters all right: *the police will see to that.*"

<sup>69</sup> The *Calcutta Statesman* (March 5th, 1931) mentions an increase in the pay of police in Assam owing to the difficulty experienced in obtaining recruits: such is the loathing with which the peasant regards the force, in spite of its attractive opportunities.

<sup>70</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, pp. 47-48. Mr. Elwin republishes some interesting extracts on the subject from Sleeman's *Rambles and Recollections*, with comments by Vincent Smith. Officially such practices no longer exist, but Mr. Elwin records that "the Baigas still cherish the memory of an Englishman who paid them their full wages."

## CHAPTER IX

### INDIAN RENAISSANCE

IN one of his more delightfully naïve moments Lord Halifax—Lord Irwin as he was then styled—gave the following information to the Bengal Club at Calcutta:

“I imagine that most of the blemishes on early Company rule were attributable to the imperative instructions of directors, urging their representatives to earn the wherewithal with which to meet the shareholders’ desire for dividends.”<sup>1</sup>

It will have been observed that the shareholding class lost neither interest nor power by the termination of the Company’s rule. On the contrary, a new commercial interest entered the field with the rise of the heavy industries in Britain and the increasing necessity for exporting surplus capital. From the early ’nineties interest on investments in India becomes a matter of growing importance.

In the beginning these investments did not compete with British industries. Railways, and even canals, which were developed later, so far from competing with the general plan, assisted the process of developing India as a colony.<sup>2</sup> British manufactures were distributed by better communication, while a larger supply of food-stuffs and raw materials found its way to the ports, and thence to Europe. The plantation system, so far as it was developed, agreed equally well with this general plan.

As early as 1810, the conditions on European indigo plantations in Bengal were officially admitted to be scandalous;<sup>3</sup> and serious oppression continued until 1860, when the cultivation of indigo was largely abandoned by Europeans after serious risings and disturbances among

the labourers. In Assam the cultivation of tea has continued increasingly to interest British capitalists up to the present day. As this occupation has provided some of the earliest instances of the organisation of Indian labour, it justifies some individual attention.

Labour for the tea plantations was recruited for many years by means of the "Slave Law," as it was called in India, whereby men and women who were persuaded to sign a contract which they could not read, found themselves tied by penal clauses to work for a number of years in the tea gardens.<sup>4</sup> "A certain amount of harshness and oppression, at times even of downright cruelty" was officially admitted.<sup>5</sup> Any attempt to organise the labourers was punishable by laws forbidding "illegal assembly." No extensive improvement in the lot of these plantation workers took place till 1920, when a strike at Hansara was followed by widespread political agitation.<sup>6</sup>

Mining was a later development, arising directly out of the export of capital and the rise of the heavy industries. The gold mine at Marikuppam was already by 1889 able to pay a bonus of 50 per cent on its share capital and has averaged a 33 per cent dividend for over fifty years, in addition to enormous duties paid to the Maharaja of Mysore. The average wage in this mine, even in 1931, was less than 1/6 per day. Like the plantations and the railways, mines were supplementary to the general scheme of nineteenth century political economy.

The Government policy up to the time of the War was to foster this system by the discouragement of all Indian industries which could compete with those of Britain.<sup>7</sup> The British Government even intervened to suppress a "Department of Industries" which had been set up in 1906, under the direction of Mr. Alfred Chatterton, by the Government of Madras.<sup>8</sup> Following the same fiscal policy which we have already observed in the earlier part of the century, the Government also kept tariffs at the lowest possible figure consistent with revenue requirements.

A long table of revenue duties imposed in 1852 shows that at that time no duty rose above 10 per cent, while preference was given to British products in the case of



woollens, cotton and silk piece goods, cotton thread, twist and yarn, metals, marine stores and books.<sup>9</sup> Of these products cotton twist and yarn, cotton and silk goods and woollens were among the most important imports of India;<sup>10</sup> from which fact it is clear that the object of fiscal policy was to encourage the sale of British goods. At the same time the export of food grains from India rose steadily.<sup>11</sup> In Madras the inland duties continued even after their abolition in other Provinces in 1853; and an English magistrate and revenue officer has recorded how this taxation operated:

"It is levied upon everyone almost who does not cultivate land. . . . If an old woman takes vegetables to market and sells them at the corner of the street, she is assessed for selling vegetables. . . . But no tax is levied upon European traders. Perhaps next door to the man who is making a few rupees a year there is a European trader making hundreds, but he pays nothing."<sup>12</sup>

Import duties rose slightly after the Mutiny on account of the financial difficulties of the Government; but from 1861 onwards they fell steadily by a series of reductions.<sup>13</sup> In 1874 the Manchester Chamber of Commerce presented a memorial to the Secretary of State for India demanding the withdrawal of Indian tariffs at 5 per cent on British cotton manufacture and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on yarns. In a second communication they pointed out "the baneful operation of these duties," which, they said, was

"abundantly confirmed by the latest advice from Bombay, which shows that . . . a large number of new mills are now being projected."<sup>14</sup>

As a result the Indian Government imposed a 5 per cent duty on the import of long staple cotton, from which finer goods could be manufactured in competition with Lancashire.<sup>15</sup> The Tariff Act of 1875 failed, however, to satisfy the British manufacturers; and a singular controversy arose between the Viceroy and the British Government. Lord Northbrook, though a Liberal and Free Trader,

found a small tariff on cotton goods necessary to the financial interests of the Indian Government. On the other hand, Lord Salisbury, the Conservative Secretary of State for India, found a Free Trade policy necessary to conciliate the powerful commercial interests of Lancashire.<sup>16</sup>

This incident ended with Northbrook's resignation in 1876. The following year the House of Commons passed a resolution condemning "the duties now levied upon cotton manufactures imported into India."<sup>17</sup> This resolution was forwarded by Salisbury to the Indian Government with the alarming comment that in India

"five more mills were about to begin work; and that it was estimated that by the end of March 1877 there would be 1,231,284 spindles employed in India."<sup>18</sup>

In 1878 a number of articles with which Indian manufacturers were supposed to compete were exempted from duty, but the Manchester Chamber of Commerce remained unsatisfied.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, even members of the Indian Civil Service protested at the open way in which Lancashire interests were controlling the situation. Mr. Whitby Stokes, a member of the Viceroy's Council, said that "the powerful Lancashire manufacturers will be encouraged by their second victory to new attacks on our revenue." He also feared that the Indian newspapers would publish the fact that the tariff reduction had been made

"solely in the interests of Manchester, and for the benefit of the Conservative party, who are, it is alleged, anxious to obtain the Lancashire vote at the coming elections. Of course the people of India will be wrong; they always must be wrong when they impute selfish motives to the ruling race."<sup>20</sup>

Sir Alexander Arbuthnot expressed a similar opinion. Whilst referring again to "the supposed interests of a political party, the leaders of which deem it necessary at any cost to retain the political support of the cotton manufacturers of Lancashire," Sir Alexander made reference to a new factor in the situation which was destined to modify the Government's policy in the years to come.

The feeling that British policy was dictated by Manchester manufacturers was, he said, "shared by the leading representatives of the European mercantile community" in Madras and Calcutta, and by "the great body of the official hierarchy throughout India."<sup>21</sup>

These statements must be coupled with Whitby Stokes' reference to the Indian press in order to grasp the nature of the new economic influences which were growing up. Slowly new industries were coming into being; and the Indian mills which had so terrified Lord Salisbury and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had created a new capitalist interest. Hence there emerges, at the end of the nineteenth century, an Indian capitalism, an Indian middle-class, and a British vested interest which is linked up with both through finance and share capital.

For the time, however, Lancashire still held the field without serious rivalry. The remaining duties, except those on salt and liquor (both Government monopolies in India) were abolished in 1882. For twelve years after this no fresh duties were imposed except a small duty on petroleum. In 1894, however, faced with a budget deficit of over £2,000,000, the Government imposed a small duty on imports other than cotton. Later in the same year a second Tariff Act extended the tax to cotton yarns and fabrics, but carefully imposed a countervailing Excise Duty of the same amount on all Indian yarns likely to compete with Lancashire products.<sup>22</sup>

This time it was the Scottish manufacturers who were the first to express their dissatisfaction, and a deputation from them waited on the Secretary of State for India in January 1895.<sup>23</sup> The Lancashire mill-owners and merchants followed suit in May. Lord George Hamilton, who became Secretary of State in June of that year,<sup>24</sup> told the Indian Government that "the Indian ports should be free from custom duties, as they practically were from 1882 to 1894," and he demanded at least

"that the duties should be placed on such a footing as will not infringe pledges that have been given or afford ground for continued complaint and attack."<sup>25</sup>

Following these instructions, the tax on yarns was removed by the Indian Government, and the tariff on cotton goods was reduced to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent with a counter-vailing excise duty which applied without discrimination to all Indian cotton goods.<sup>26</sup>

The reader in possession of these facts will learn without shock that

"Sometime prior to the War certain attempts to encourage Indian industries by means of pioneer factories and Government subsidies were effectively discouraged from Whitehall."<sup>27</sup>

Whilst the pressure on agriculture continued (which was later to afford Dr. Mann such remarkable data in his studies of the decrease in individual holdings in the Deccan)<sup>28</sup> industries were, however, as we have already noted, slowly coming into being.

For climatic reasons it was in Bombay that the cotton industry first developed on factory lines; and it is this fact which had placed on a level with the older British settlements of Calcutta and Madras the "pestilential hole" for which John Company once paid £10 per annum as rent to the British Crown.

A writer in 1889 tells us that Bombay already housed 800,000 people. His description of the native town at night is interesting, as much for the attitude it betrays in the writer himself as for its account of conditions which have remained unchanged to the present day, except that the over-crowding is probably a great deal worse. The town, he writes, on a hot night,

"is what a field of battle would be if the dead and wounded were shrouded as they fell. The foot-pavements on both sides are strewn with sleeping Hindus, enveloped with a white cloth covering them from head to foot. They lie on the pathway in every position of lassitude and fatigue, an army of snoring, happy natives."

It is not, perhaps, irrelevant to contrast at this point the lot of these "happy natives" with that of their British

trustees, as depicted by the same writer. "Some people," he tells us, "do not like Bombay. They weary of its beauty." But it seems there were compensations:

"If a man care nothing for riding, driving, hunting (jackals), billiards, whist, dancing, dining, yachting, cricket, badminton, lawn tennis, golf or good company he will find the time hang heavy on his hands. But some mortals there are who can find in these diversions—or some of them—the wherewithal to pass time not unpleasantly, and for those there is no better place than Bombay to live in with—say—£3,000 a year to live on."<sup>29</sup>

From this extract it will be clear that by 1889 the White Man's Burden had come to roost in Bombay. What was more important, however, was the gradual emergence among the Indian urban population of new class categories which were in the coming years to replace the rigidity of the antiquated system of caste.

It must not be forgotten that the castes themselves were originally trade guilds. The Marquess of Zetland has traced the evolution of the caste system from craft and merchant guilds which "came into being spontaneously, and themselves evolved the laws by which their activities were governed." These laws, he asserts, "according to the ancient law-books of the country, commanded recognition at the hands of the King." The central government was, in fact, the executive authority by which the laws of the guilds were enforced; and Zetland carefully contrasts the position of these autonomous organisations with the local authorities in Great Britain whose powers have devolved from that of the Central Government.<sup>30</sup>

Under the centralised despotism of the Mughals and the British this guild system, like the village organisation, had undergone profound changes. Caste had become merely a complex arrangement of hereditary barriers, excluding the various sections of Hindu society from one another and the whole social organism from any progressive influence. It had, in short, degenerated into a religious refuge for a race that sought mystic consolation for a material catastrophe.<sup>31</sup>

Industrialism, wherever its influence was felt, meant the inevitable destruction of this system. But the social evolution of new classes as experienced in Western countries was complicated in India by two inter-related factors. In the first place there was the foreign government, representing vast economic interests antagonistic to the industrial development of India. And secondly there was the discontented Indian intelligentsia.

The historical origin of the intelligentsia and of its discontent is to be found in the policy, associated especially with the name of Macaulay, whereby the East India Company attempted to create a distinct class among the Indian peoples, which was to be educated on the Western model.<sup>32</sup> The purpose of this class was to fill the minor positions in the administration, which were considered neither sufficiently dignified nor sufficiently lucrative for Englishmen.<sup>33</sup> Acting upon a familiar principle, the Government kept down the cost of its clerical labour by maintaining a supply of *babus* in excess of the demand. Whilst, however, a small margin of unemployment has generally proved profitable to capitalist enterprise by its effect upon labour costs, the effect in this particular instance can hardly have been regarded with undiluted satisfaction. For it was from the discontented intelligentsia and its demand for increased opportunities that Indian nationalism came into being.

With the early days of nationalism there is no need to concern ourselves at any length. Compared with the political issues which have roused hundreds of millions in India to-day, the problems that concerned these early nationalists were as trivial as the number of individuals involved. Nevertheless, in historical perspective these men have their importance and their names are justly honoured in modern India.<sup>34</sup>

The demands of these early nationalists were mainly valid but all utterly inadequate. Mr. G. K. Gokhale, who was probably the greatest of them, gave considerable publicity to the demand for the Indianisation of the Services.<sup>35</sup> His evidence before the Welby Commission is of some interest, both from the point of view of infor-

mation and as an indication of the nature of the nationalist demand in the 'nineties.

Mr. Gokhale showed that, according to a Parliamentary return of May, 1892, 2,388 officers, drawing 10,000 rupees per annum or over, were employed in the higher branches of the civil and military departments. Of these only sixty were Indians "and even these," said Gokhale, "with the exception of such as are Judges, stop at a comparatively low level." Totalling the salaries of these higher grades he showed that forty-two million rupees went annually into "European" (that is to say, in practice, British) pockets as against one million that was received by Indians. In the railways, operated under Government contracts, and financed (as we have seen) by the Indian taxes, all officers drawing over 10,000 rupees were, without exception, Europeans. In addition to salaries, said Mr. Gokhale, "there are besides heavy pension and furlough charges, more than three and a half millions sterling being paid to Europeans in England for the purpose in 1890."<sup>36</sup>

In criticising the excessive cost of the British bureaucracy and the manipulation of governmental machinery to provide lucrative posts for members of the ruling race, the nationalists neglected the growing tribute which British capitalism was steadily increasing by more devious means. Plantations, mines and railways, as we have already observed, were all part of this general scheme of exploitation. The "national debt," which nationalism had not yet dared to challenge, was equally important.<sup>37</sup> The next step in the development of nationalist agitation arose from a natural convergence of the intellectuals and the industrialists, resulting in the demand for "fiscal autonomy" in order that the rising industries of India might be protected against those of Lancashire, which were entrenched, as we have seen, by a hundred years of discriminatory legislation.

In spite of the appalling poverty of the peasants there was as yet no sign of political activity among them. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, remained for years a small organization without mass contacts, though not without influence.<sup>38</sup> In the early nineteenth century there was already a marked schism between the "Extremists"

(led by Tilak) and the Moderates. The bureaucracy, aware of future possibilities, showed its apprehension as the "Extremists" increased in strength; but it was not till the end of the War of 1914-18 that the Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi, emerged as a national party with strong popular support.

The years before the War were nevertheless marked by sufficient "unrest" to cause disturbance to the mental composure of the ruling race. Indian terrorists succeeded in some notable *coups*, of which the assassination of Sir Curzon Wyllie in 1909 was probably the most notable. Mr. Wilfred Scawen Blunt in his diaries makes an interesting comparison between the "religious horror" of the whole English Press at this event and its applause for "exactly such crimes in Italy fifty years ago and in Russia the other day."<sup>39</sup> He records a conversation with Winston Churchill, at that time a member of the Liberal Government, in which Churchill "quoted with admiration" the last words of the Indian assassin "as the finest ever made in the name of patriotism."<sup>40</sup>

The reply of pre-war Liberalism in Britain to Indian Nationalism and Terrorism was the same judicious mixture of repression and "reform" that has since become the recognised remedy.<sup>41</sup> Lord Morley, like many a Liberal and Labour politician since, adopted as Secretary of State for India all the measures that he had condemned when in opposition. By a Press Law in June, 1908, he authorised the confiscation without any trial of printing presses where "sedition" had been printed. The following month the Indian leader Tilak was deported to the Andaman Islands for publishing a "seditious" article in his paper. Scawen Blunt commented that "Morley is playing the high old Russian game there, and there is not a man in the House of Commons to ask a question about it."<sup>42</sup>

The other side of this picture was the reform of the Constitution under Morley and the contemporary Viceroy, Lord Minto.<sup>43</sup> The announcement of "reform" was heralded by the imprisonment of leading Indian nationalists and newspaper editors.<sup>44</sup> Provincial Councils with "unofficial" majorities were given a pretence of authority



and one Indian, to be nominated by the Viceroy, was to have a place on the Executive Council. As Blunt predicted, a "tame man" was invariably chosen for this last post. The "unofficial" Council majorities included Anglo-Indian non-officials, so that Government nominees and Europeans combined to control even these sham legislatures. Such, however, was the caution of the Liberal reformers that they vested powers in the Government to veto the candidature of any Indian, lest even a statutory minority should prove a troublesome opposition.

The truth of Lord Lytton's words had been demonstrated, that "we have to choose between prohibiting them and cheating them, and we have chosen the less straightforward course."<sup>45</sup> The year 1914, however, was to inaugurate an era of perjured promises and pledges such as no previous age had known; and India was not forgotten by the prophets of Jam Tomorrow. In response to the vagaries of Whitehall and Delhi, most of the nationalist leaders declared for co-operation in the fight for democracy, in the childish belief that they were to have a share in this democracy when it had been "saved."

Among the peasants there seems to have been more shrewdness of insight. With such knowledge as they had of outside affairs, the people of the villages had applauded the Boer successes in the Boer War, and their sympathies were now, once more, with the enemies of their own Government. They even rejoiced at the fall of Kut, in spite of the fact that Indian soldiers were defending it, and wanted to know "who these cursed Americans could be, who had come to rescue the defeated English."<sup>46</sup>

Among the exceptions to this general rule were Christian converts.<sup>47</sup> A pamphlet published by the Church Missionary Society, entitled *In Tiger Jungles*, is quoted by Mr. Elwin as showing the "progress of Christian spirit among the Gonds," and an extract shows how this spirit operated during the War:

"That the teaching given to the young has not been without result was strikingly illustrated during the war. The efforts of Government to gain recruits from the Gonds met with little or no response, and an appeal was

made to Christian Gonds. As a result, 25 per cent of the eligible men joined up, and through them many non-Christian Gonds. To show its appreciation the Government inserted a special paragraph in the *Gazette*, praising in glowing terms the Christian community and holding it up as a pattern of good citizenship and loyalty."<sup>48</sup>

Agitation against the Government developed as the War progressed, and as early as December, 1914, a general rising was planned, to begin in Bengal and the Punjab.<sup>49</sup> Thanks to the elaborate espionage system of the Government, such plans were frustrated; but national feeling was further incensed by the Defence of India Act, which (not for the first or last time in the history of the British Raj) legalised imprisonment without trial.

With the entry of Turkey into the War the Indian Moslems were roused by what they conceived to be their common interest with the Turkish Sultan, as head of the Islamic world.<sup>50</sup> The *Khilafat* Movement was the spontaneous expression of this solidarity. At the same time the Nationalist leaders were disillusioned by such measures as the Defence of India Act, which bore no superficial resemblance to that democracy in defence of which they had been persuaded to co-operate.

The war ended with even louder talk of "self-determination," sponsored by President Wilson, as one of the war aims of the Allied Powers.<sup>51</sup> The Russian Revolution kindled a new flame, destined to outlive the fantasies of liberalism. These "pathetic and delusive hopes," writes Mr. Dodwell, "seemed to promise the advent of an age when power and interests would be subordinated to argument and ideals." Nationalism took the field once more, demanding Home Rule and, as an immediate objective, the repeal of the 1910 Press Act.

The end of the War was celebrated in Delhi by fresh repressive measures. The infamous Rowlatt Acts aroused a storm of indignation in which the Nationalists united with the *Khilafat* Movement. These Acts provided for arrests without warrants and indefinite detention without trial. Where trials took place they could be held in secret, and their proceedings were not to be made public. The

accused could be kept in ignorance of the names of his accusers and of witnesses against him, with whom he was not to be confronted. No counsel was allowed to the accused, if tried under these Acts; all legal procedure could be disregarded and against the sentence there was no right of appeal. In addition to these judicial innovations, ex-political offenders were made to deposit securities and forbidden to take part in any political, educational, or religious activities.<sup>52</sup>

In the agitation of 1919, which followed the passing of the Rowlatt Acts, the Punjab took the lead. The situation at Amritsar became so serious that the Government resorted to open terrorism. After a series of brutalities which provoked reprisals on the part of the Punjabis, a massacre was ordered at Jalianwala Bagh as a conclusive demonstration of the Government's power.<sup>53</sup>

This incident was so horrible that for nearly eight months all news of it was officially suppressed, during which period neither the Parliament nor the Press of Britain discussed the matter. When at last it was officially admitted, a Commission of Enquiry was appointed under the chairmanship of Lord Hunter, to investigate the facts.<sup>54</sup> The report of this Commission showed that a public meeting, convened at the Jalianwala Bagh, had been prohibited at the last moment. General Dyer then marched on the place (which was a public garden with only one entrance) and occupied the only outlet with his troops. The crowd being thus unable to disperse, Dyer ordered his troops to fire.

General Dyer admitted before the Hunter Commission that there was no question of his men having been attacked. "I had made up my mind," he said, "that I would do all the men to death if they were going to continue the meeting."<sup>55</sup> Asked whether he redirected his fire from time to time to where the crowd was thickest, he admitted that he had done so.<sup>56</sup> He had committed this "horrible act," he said, because he "thought it would be doing a jolly lot of good and they would realise they were not to be wicked." The Hunter Commission estimated that 379 persons were killed and 1,200 wounded, though these figures are universally considered in India to be an underestimate.<sup>57</sup>

Following the massacre, which has often been excused as an act of panic, a deliberate and diabolical régime of terror was established in the city. No Indian will ever forget General Dyer's "crawling order" by which all Indians who passed along a particular street were made to crawl on their bellies, on pain of instant death.<sup>58</sup> For the slightest indication of "disrespect" to their British masters Indians were publicly flogged, while military tribunals sat daily, dealing out summary "justice" against which there was no appeal. Water supplies were cut off from Indian houses and prisoners were kept in open cages under the scorching sun.

Throughout the whole of the Punjab martial law was imposed. Eighteen death sentences were passed and immediately carried out, while twenty-eight persons were sentenced to transportation for life. To prevent news from reaching the outside world, no one was allowed to enter or leave the Province. Meanwhile an inestimable number of people were killed by the bombing of Punjab villages from the air, and armoured trains which pulled up in these villages massacred all inhabitants within range by indiscriminate firing from machine guns.<sup>59</sup> In one town the biggest schoolboys were flogged, apparently to encourage the others, and at Lahore all students were forced to attend a roll-call four times a day.<sup>60</sup>

Dyer justified his action on the ground that he saved India from revolution. Whether this was the case or not, he certainly did more than any other man to arouse a revolutionary mentality in the Indian people. All over the country meetings of protest were held as the news of the Punjab horrors gradually became known. Festivities organised by the Government to celebrate the Allied victory were boycotted, and the Government's processions passed down empty streets, where the shops were closed in token of national mourning.<sup>61</sup>

The last act of the Amritsar tragedy was the virtual endorsement of all the actions of the military by a Government which clearly deplored the clumsiness rather than the crime. As a face-saving measure, Dyer was deprived of his command and retired with a pension, while a few

other officers were removed to positions in other parts of the country, where they received the treatment due to heroes and martyrs.<sup>62</sup> The Viceroy (Lord Chelmsford) and the Governor of the Punjab (Sir Michael O'Dwyer) were praised for their conduct in abetting these atrocities,<sup>63</sup> and not a single officer or official received any harsher treatment than the "punishment" of General Dyer.

The blood of Amritsar proved, however, to be the seed of the National Congress. From a policy of co-operation with further projected "reforms," it swung round to non-co-operation. In 1920 Congress declared for a policy which included the surrender of all Government titles and offices, the boycott of all Government public functions, of Government schools and colleges, and of the new legislatures about to be established under the Montagu-Chelmsford Constitution. A boycott of foreign goods completed the programme, and ensured the support of the Indian capitalist class.

With a more radical programme and a clearer demand for Home Rule (*Swaraj*) as the goal of Nationalism, the Congress at last made contact with the Indian peasants, and in every future struggle was able to command mass support in the Indian villages.<sup>64</sup> Here the ever-increasing poverty proved good soil for a political leadership that had been too long delayed. The ideology of the Congress was as yet crude, its mass contact a matter of spasmodic appeals; but both represented new developments of the highest importance, and for both developments Mr. Gandhi, more than any other individual, was personally responsible.

No fairer or more balanced account of Mr. Gandhi's place in Indian history will probably be written in years to come than that of his great socialist contemporary, Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru contends that the Indian nationalist movement must be criticised as a bourgeois movement, representing a natural historical development.

"Gandhi represented that movement and the Indian masses in relation to that movement to a supreme degree, and he became the voice of the Indian people to that extent. He functioned inevitably within the orbit of nationalist ideology, but the dominating passion that consumed him was a desire to raise the masses."<sup>65</sup>

According to Nehru, Gandhi largely succeeded through the Congress in changing the Indian peasants, "from a demoralised, timid and hopeless mass, bullied and crushed by every dominant interest, into a people with self-respect and self-reliance, resisting tyranny, and capable of united action and sacrifice for a larger cause." No more could be expected from a national movement or a nationalist leader; but this vital transformation, the necessary historical precursor of any socialist movement, was brought about under Gandhi's personal leadership.<sup>66</sup>

As Nehru shows, this leadership would not have proved effective if the circumstances had not been favourable. "But," he adds, "a great leader is necessary to take advantage of circumstances and conditions." The fact that "the British Government considered him their most dangerous opponent" was in Nehru's view sufficient evidence of Gandhi's objective value, "while groups with a more advanced ideology functioned largely in the air" because they could not adjust themselves to the epoch in which they were living or the people whom they wished to influence.<sup>67</sup>

Viewed historically the early Non-co-operation Movement was little more than a dress rehearsal for the great popular movements of 1930 and 1932.<sup>68</sup> At the very point when the movement was to have developed into mass "civil disobedience," it was checked by Gandhi himself on the ground that non-violence was an essential basis for such a movement, and that the people had in several places made reprisals against the violence of the Government.<sup>69</sup> Characteristically the Government waited until Gandhi had called off the civil disobedience movement and defeated his critics at the annual meeting of the Congress in February 1922. It then arrested Gandhi and sentenced him for "causing disaffection."

In a country where its celebrated prisoner, before incarceration, had restored "law and order," the Government was now able to introduce its "reforms" in almost ideal conditions. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford constitution India was henceforward to be governed by a "di-archy." Strictly limited powers were accorded to an All-India

Legislative Assembly, where nearly one-third of the members were nominated by the Government, the rest being elected on a complicated property franchise, representing 0.5 per cent of the Indian people. In the upper house, known as the Council of State, there was a permanent majority of persons either nominated by the Government or appointed to represent special interests, the electorate being even smaller. All matters of vital importance, such as the armed forces and foreign relations, remained under the direct control of the Governor-General, acting as the representative of the British Government and responsible only (through the Secretary of State for India) to the British Parliament.

To complicate this somewhat laboured practical joke, the Governor-General retained powers (in no sense purely nominal) to veto legislation passed by these mock representative institutions, with additional authority to "certify" bills rejected by the Legislative Assembly if he considered this necessary for "peace, order and good government."<sup>70</sup>

Provincial Councils were set up on the same plan, with an electorate which excluded all but 3 per cent of the people.<sup>71</sup> Departments "reserved" from their control included Revenue, Finance, Forests (except in the case of Bombay), Irrigation, and—of course—"Law and Order." Indian Ministers responsible to the Councils were allowed to amuse themselves with a few departments in which they could do no damage to British interests, their activities being effectively limited by the small amount of money left for their use after the "reserved" departments were all satisfied.<sup>72</sup> Departments "transferred" to the Councils included on their permanent staffs members of the Civil Service, who could not be removed or disciplined in any way by the Indian ministers whose orders they were supposed to obey. These "covenanted" officials remained responsible only to the Governor-General, and could only be dismissed by the Secretary of State for India.<sup>73</sup>

Lest such enormous powers in Indian hands should prove fatal to the Empire, a last resort was left to the Viceroy, who was empowered to issue "ordinances," having all the force of law and superseding all existing legislation. In Chapter XV of this book we shall endeavour to examine

the use of this Viceregal authority to transform a sham constitution, by a few strokes of the pen, into an open dictatorship such as Mussolini himself might envy.

The years 1922 to 1927 were marked by little that was spectacular in the political field. A Labour Government in Britain came and went, administering a despotic system with competence and efficiency worthy of the best Conservative traditions.<sup>74</sup> While the ablest political minds were employed in unobtrusive education and propaganda among the masses, a few explored the possibilities of the 'new constitution sufficiently thoroughly to disillusion everyone else, even where they failed to achieve this result for themselves. Meanwhile the steady growth of Indian capitalism and the requirements of British interests in Indian industries made further administrative changes imperative; and the continued leftward drift of Congress pointed to the necessity for granting concessions that would conciliate "moderate" opinion and isolate the "extremists."

In 1927 the Simon Commission was therefore appointed to examine the working of the Indian Constitution. No Indian was appointed to the Commission because, as Mr. Baldwin explained to the House of Commons, "When God wants a hard thing done, he tells it to His Englishmen."<sup>75</sup> In full knowledge that the Commission was to be boycotted in India, the Labour Party agreed to co-operate with it, and two Labour representatives were appointed among its members.<sup>76</sup> While this Commission roamed around India interviewing tame Indians and British bureaucrats, a committee of all the Indian political parties drew up a constitution, based on the minimum demand of Dominion Status and the fundamental right of adult suffrage.

By 1928 it was clear that big political developments were about to occur throughout India. In Bardoli 87,000 peasants defied the Bombay Government and after a prolonged struggle won the substance of their demand. They fought against an increased assessment of their taxes, and by a complete and united refusal to pay any tax whatsoever they succeeded in obtaining terms much more favourable to themselves than those which the Government had originally sought to impose.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile among



the dominant political groups disillusionment was complete. The Government had planned two sham constitutions and was manifestly in the process of manufacturing a third, this time with the hearty co-operation of the Labour Party. Indian nationalism had discovered the abysmal void behind the verbosity of Macdonald which England was to discover a few years later. "They recognise," wrote Horace Alexander in 1929, "a few I.L.P. idealists as their only remaining friends in England." But these they judged to be "few, feeble and helpless."<sup>78</sup>

The boycott of the Simon Commission was extremely effective; and all that troops, armoured cars and armed police could do to quell demonstrations against it did not prevent the hostility of the populace from being shown everywhere the Commission travelled.<sup>79</sup> The arrest in March, 1929, of the most active working-class and trade union leaders, who were charged at Meerut with "conspiracy to deprive the King of the Sovereignty of British India," was a dramatic indication that the Indian working-class could no longer be regarded as a pawn on the political chess-board, but was beginning to take the lead in what had now become a straight fight between the mass of the Indian people and the British Government.

In the same year Labour returned to office for the second time in Britain. The pompous announcement of the Round Table Conference in November, 1929, was followed by questions regarding the terms on which the Conference was to meet. Lord Irwin made it as clear as Viceregal language permits that the delegates to this Conference were to be nominated by himself without the slightest regard to the relative strength or popular support of the various interests concerned. He also admitted that the Conference would not meet as a predominantly Indian Conference to devise a constitution for a self-governing India, but merely to talk of everything or nothing, leaving all decisions to the British Parliament. In the meantime political prisoners were to remain in jail, prosecutions for "sedition" were to continue (including the Meerut Trial) and the whole machinery of autocracy and repression was to remain in operation without the slightest modification.<sup>80</sup>

In these circumstances the National Congress, meeting at Lahore in December, 1929, rejected all co-operation with the Round Table Conference, declared for complete independence as the national goal, and agreed to the commencement of Civil Disobedience in 1930.<sup>81</sup> The illegal manufacture of salt was selected as the first challenge to Governmental authority, for reasons that are more obvious to the Indian mind than they can ever be to the people of this country. Salt is in India a Government monopoly; and even the crystallising of salt from sea-water is consequently illegal. The unpopularity of the salt-tax is proverbial and derives from the appalling poverty of the people, who resent deeply the payment of an inflated price for a commodity which, in many parts of the country, they can manufacture for themselves without any cost.<sup>82</sup>

The struggle which began in April, 1930, continued till 1932, except for the temporary and partial cessation of activity in 1931. Gandhi's greatest blunder, the "truce" which enabled him to waste a few months at the Round Table Conference in spite of previous pledges, proved, however, to be fatal to Indian nationalism. What Geneva did for the Communist Party, what Parliament has done for so many British socialists, the Round Table Conference achieved in the case of the Indian nationalists. Never was expediency more clearly shown to be the short cut to ruin.

Peace, as Clemenceau said, is war continued by other means. Before Gandhi had left London on his return journey the Government, which had used the "truce" to consolidate its forces and recovered largely from its loss of prestige in 1930-31, had launched a counter-offensive. One of the most drastic ordinances ever promulgated in India was proclaimed in Bengal, and a reign of terror in the North-West Frontier Province broke the nationalist movement in what had become its strongest centre. We shall consider later, in relation to another subject, the record of repression during the whole of this period from 1930 to 1932.<sup>83</sup> In this brief survey of recent events it is sufficient to note that since 1932 there has been a lull in political activity comparable to that which followed the débacle of 1922. But it has not been without important

developments, as the next two chapters will show. And the year 1937, like 1930, will bring into the political arena the new forces which have grown up in the shadow of these uneventful years.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Problems*. Speeches by Lord Irwin. London, 1931 (p. 242).

<sup>2</sup> "Railways must appear to an Indian to be rather like huge iron suckers, taking the corn out of the country for Europe," writes Lt.-Col. Osburn (*Must England Lose India?* London, 1930).

<sup>3</sup> A Government Circular, dated July 13th, 1810, refers to charges against the planters "established beyond all doubt or dispute," which included illegal detentions, floggings, and "Acts of violence, which, although they amount not in the legal sense to murder, have occasioned the death of natives." Indigo plantations still exist in India, and oppression on the plantations in Champaran was the subject of one of Gandhi's numerous campaigns.

<sup>4</sup> The Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (1859) which was not repealed until 1926. It was, however, modified in 1901 and 1920 because conditions were so scandalous that they became notorious throughout India and labour could not be obtained for an expanding industry.

<sup>5</sup> *Report on Labour Immigration into Assam* (1886). The same authority indicates organised opposition among the workers, under the title of "turbulence, conspiracies and maliciously concocted charges."

<sup>6</sup> *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India*, by Dr. Ahmad Mukhtar. In 1921, during the Non-co-operation Movement, there was an exodus of nearly 6,000 labourers and dependents from the Assam tea gardens. As late as 1931 the Whitley Report revealed that children worked in these plantations "as soon as they could walk." This authority gave the monthly wage figures as *Men*: 15s. to £1; *Women*: 12s. to 16s.; *Children*: 8s. to 11s.

Major Graham Pole in his book, *I Refer to India*, cites the case of an English tea-planter who kicked a worker to death, but was acquitted of murder. This case in 1925 and a similar one in 1920 indicate that licensed brutality still rules the plantations.

<sup>7</sup> An ex-editor of the *Times of India*, Sir Valentine Chirol, stated that "Our record in regard to Indian industrial development has not always been a very creditable one in the past, and it was only under the pressure of war necessities that Government was driven to abandon its former attitude of aloofness, if not jealousy, towards Indian enterprise." (*Observer*, April 2nd, 1922.)

<sup>8</sup> The Department was engaged in research, and after its suppression Chatterton took service with the Indian State of Mysore. See *Rebel India*, by H. N. Brailsford, p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 158.

<sup>11</sup> A table given by Dutt, (Vol II, p. 162) shows that the value of food grains exported in 1849 was £858,691, and that this figure rose

to £3,790,374 by 1858. By the end of the century it had reached twelve millions sterling per annum (Dutt, Vol II, p. 163).

<sup>12</sup> Commons' Fourth Report, 1853. Evidence of Mr. J. W. B. Dykes.

<sup>13</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 402. During this period the import of cotton goods continued to rise steadily, from a value of £8,088,927 in 1859 to £16,450,212 in 1876.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted by Dutt (Vol II, p. 404) from a Resolution of the Indian Government dated August 12th, 1875.

<sup>15</sup> The Indian cotton is of the short staple variety, so that a tax on long staple cotton (similar to that used by Lancashire mills) was intended to hamper the Indian industry in competition with British goods in so far as such competition was possible in finer fabrics.

<sup>16</sup> See Dutt, Vol II, pp. 404-407. This extensive agitation in England regarding a tax of only 5 per cent (largely offset by a tax on raw cotton which almost equalised the situation) is extremely interesting. When in 1930 Indian opinion objected to a 5 per cent preference for British goods, English people expressed surprise that so small a matter as 5 per cent should worry them!

<sup>17</sup> Resolution of July 11th, 1877. (Quoted by Dutt, Vol II, p. 410).

<sup>18</sup> Lord Salisbury's letter to the Governor-General (Lord Lytton) dated August 30th, 1877.

<sup>19</sup> Resolution of the Board of Directors, March 27th, 1878.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Dutt (Vol II, pp. 412-13) from a Minute of the Council dated March 13th, 1879. Dutt also quotes the evidence of Mr. Rivers Thompson, afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, which is similar in substance.

<sup>21</sup> Seventeen years later, (according to papers presented to Parliament relating to the Indian Tariff Act and Cotton Duties Act of 1896) a Mr. Playfair, who represented the European mercantile community of Calcutta on the Governor-General's Council, expressed sentiments which bear out Sir Alexander's contention. "Because Lancashire masters," he said, "may be alarmed and discontented on account of the state of their affairs, I see no reason why they should unjustly attack a separate industry in India." (See Dutt, Vol II, p. 541.)

<sup>22</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 538. The Tariff and Excise Duty were both fixed at 5 per cent, the latter to apply only to the finer counts.

<sup>23</sup> Dutt, Vol II, p. 539. It should be noted that India at this time imported annually over £20,000,000's worth of cotton fabrics and yarns, almost entirely from Great Britain.

<sup>24</sup> After the fall of the Liberal Government.

<sup>25</sup> Despatch of September 5th, 1895. The "pledges" referred to were Conservative Party pledges to Lancashire.

<sup>26</sup> Cotton Duties Act and Tariff Act of 1896. These Acts were passed despite strong opposition on the Governor-General's Council. Among other opponents Mr. Stevens (later Sir Charles Stevens) referred to the "suspicion" that the Acts were occasioned "by the exigencies of party politics in England rather than by the wants of India."

<sup>27</sup> This statement occurs in the annual official report of the Indian Government, which used to be known by the *petitio principii* title "The

Moral and Material Progress of India." (1921, page 144). Compare note 8 in this chapter.

<sup>28</sup> *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village*, by Dr. Harold Mann, formerly Director of Agriculture, Bombay Presidency. London and Bombay, 1917 (Vol I) and 1921 (Vol II).

<sup>29</sup> Walter Frewen Lord in the *English Magazine*, November, 1889. "Here is an unearned increment large enough to turn Mr. Henry George's hair white," is his facetious comment on the growth of Bombay.

<sup>30</sup> *India: A Bird's Eye View*, by Lord Ronaldshay. He refers to the fact, examined further in the previous chapter, that India possessed "a highly-developed system of local self government," and shows how, side by side with village assemblies, "which seem to have exercised judicial and municipal powers," the castes grew up "with authority which was not derived from, but which compelled the recognition of, the central government."

See also the *Oxford History of India*, pp. 34-43, for the origin of these guilds.

<sup>31</sup> The power of the priests in Ireland and of Evangelical religion in South Wales are among the numerous parallels which can be found for this phenomenon.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter XIII.

<sup>33</sup> The bigger posts were, of course, in the words of Rear-Admiral Campbell "the ambition of the brilliant scholars of Oxford and Cambridge, as a career for 'he youth of this country.'" (*The Times*, April 30th, 1932.)

<sup>34</sup> This statement has, of course, its exceptions. Dr. Lala Hardayal has accurately, but somewhat unfairly, criticised the prophets of India's "awakening," whose energies were devoted to enabling "more Indians to ruin their country by joining an aristocratic service which holds itself aloof from the masses." (*Modern Review*, Calcutta, February, 1928.)

<sup>35</sup> The Indian Services have always been, as John Bright said of the Foreign Office, "an out-door-relief department" for the British upper classes. Sir John Strachey held that "not the least important part of the competitive examination of the young Englishman was passed for him by his forefathers." (*India: Its Administration and Progress*, p. 544.)

<sup>36</sup> Evidence before the Royal Commission on Expenditure (1895-7). Quoted by Dutt, (Vol II, pp. 572-4). Since Gokhale's time, and thanks to the necessity for placating influential classes in India, there has been some increase in the proportion of Indians employed in the higher ranks of the services. The effect of such concessions, unaccompanied by a fundamental change in the nature and direction of the Government itself, has been the creation of a horde of sycophants who vie with their British masters in their devotion to anti-Indian interests. The universal contempt for Indians in the Services, from the highest officials down to the police, is one of the most striking facts in modern India and indicates how far nationalism has developed since the time of Gokhale.

<sup>37</sup> Wilfred Scawen Blunt in *My Diaries* (pp. 633-5 in the 1932 Edition), recalls his disappointment with Gokhale and with Lajpat Rai, whose name later became well-known among the nationalist leaders of India.

"He is clearly no leader of a revolution, and they will effect nothing without one," Blunt wrote of Gokhale in 1908. "If he represents anything that can be called extreme, there is small chance for India." Of Lajpat Rai Blunt said "I frightened him when I asked him what chance there was of the native army taking the National side." Blunt could not see on what grounds Morley had arrested Lajpat Rai and deported him "without trial as a danger to India."

<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that many English Liberals, including ex-officials of the Indian Government, helped to build up the Congress in its early days. These included Mr. A. O. Hume, formerly Home Secretary of the Government. The contrast between pre-war and post-war nationalism is clear when this state of affairs is compared with the non-co-operation movement of 1921-22. This was indicated by Lt.-Col. W. G. Hamilton, late Inspector-General of Prisons in Bengal. "Thousands of prisoners," he said, "were admitted to the Bengal jails . . . who were mostly coolies and mill hands." It is also interesting to note that the Colonel thought it "absurd" that "these people should claim to be treated as political prisoners." (*Journal of the East India Association*, July, 1930.)

<sup>39</sup> *My Diaries*, by W. S. Blunt, pp. 667, 673, 691 (Edition of 1932). Blunt records the stoical courage of the Indian assassin, Dingra, throughout his trial by a court whose legality he openly repudiated.

<sup>40</sup> It is interesting to note that, according to Blunt, Lloyd George expressed to Churchill "his highest admiration of Dingra's attitude as a patriot, in which he (Churchill) shared."

<sup>41</sup> To this period belongs the first *hartal* (a general strike, accompanied by the closing of all shops, etc.). It took place in Benares as a protest against a house-tax, and was effective in causing its repeal.

<sup>42</sup> Blunt's *Diaries*, pp. 618, 621. Blunt also notes on Feb. 20th, 1908, that "Morley has begun a new war in India against the Afridis, under the direction of Kitchener, whom in 1889 he attacked for his brutalities of warfare in the Soudan. Now he finds it all right and proper."

Compare the record of the Labour Party, examined in Chapter XV.

<sup>43</sup> "Morley's much expected Indian reform speech has at last been made in the House of Lords, amid much Tory applause," wrote Blunt on Dec. 18th, 1908.

<sup>44</sup> See Blunt's *Diaries*, pp. 640, 641, 646, 697. The Government, says Blunt, "telegraphed the headings of Morley's speech in a more favourable sense than the reality (a common Government trick) just as the Moderate Congress began its sittings, thus getting declarations of a 'loyal' character, which, as the Extremist Congress had been forbidden to meet, has been accepted as the unanimous voice of educated India." (The Congress was at that time split into Left and Right factions.) Blunt considered that the Reforms left India "in a worse position than when Lord Morley came into office."

<sup>45</sup> Quoted by Sir Valentine Chirol in *India*, p. 85.

<sup>46</sup> See *The Indian Ferment*, by Horace Alexander (London, 1929) pp. 187-8. Evidence on this subject is, in the nature of the case, very difficult to confirm; but the present author heard very similar accounts in India. Mr. Alexander adds: "I have English authority for the belief that much of the 'voluntary' recruitment, especially in Northern India,

was due to pressure." Much evidence on this subject was published in the Congress Report on the Punjab Atrocities of 1919 and unofficial conscription in Egypt has definitely been proved.

<sup>47</sup> As distinct from the Syrian Christians of Southern India. Any generalisations here regarding Indian Christians refer only to the converts, who, for mainly economic reasons, cluster round the mission centres.

<sup>48</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, by Verrier Elwin, (London, 1936), p. 72.

<sup>49</sup> See *Cambridge Shorter History of India*, pp. 896-8.

<sup>50</sup> British policy with regard to Turkey had for some time disturbed Indian Moslems, as Blunt shows in his *Diaries*. The Aga Khan was used by the British Government to counteract the *Khilafat* agitation, and in recognition of his loyal services at that time he was later granted the status of first-class chief with a salute of eleven guns.

<sup>51</sup> "Headlong ineptitude" is Mr. H. H. Dodwell's description of this Wilsonian doctrine. (*Cambridge Shorter History of India*, p. 898.) It must indeed have caused more shudders in Delhi than ever it did in Berlin.

<sup>52</sup> It would be difficult to find any legislation in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy to compare with this detailed denial of every accepted principle of justice. The provisions of the Rowlatt Acts show the closest similarity to the proceedings of the Court of Star Chamber, regarded in seventeenth century England as the epitome of tyranny.

<sup>53</sup> Shortly before the massacre at Jalianwala Bagh soldiers had fired on a peaceful procession, killing some twenty persons. This resulted in reprisals in which some Englishmen were killed and considerable damage was done to property. These reprisals were made the excuse for the events which followed.

<sup>54</sup> The Hunter Commission was appointed largely because of the investigations already in process by a National Congress Committee, and the necessity for issuing an official statement to counteract the effect of the findings of this independent enquiry. Actually the Hunter Report, though its findings were sufficiently damning, has always been regarded in India as "whitewash." The three Indian members of the Hunter Commission were compelled to issue a Minority Report, dissociating themselves from the British majority. The Congress Report, issued after that of the Hunter Commission, criticised its findings with devastating arguments based upon a mass of evidence which the Government Commissioners had conveniently neglected.

<sup>55</sup> Government Report on Disturbances in the Punjab, p. 114. The Congress estimate of the killed and wounded was about three times the Government figure in each category.

<sup>56</sup> Dyer admitted in evidence that he could have dispersed the crowd without firing. But, he said, they "would have come back and laughed at him."

<sup>57</sup> This event and those that followed are entered in the diary of events in the *Daily Mail* "Blue Book" on India as follows: "1919. Amritsar Riots. Many Europeans murdered."

<sup>58</sup> In this street a lady missionary had been assaulted by a mob; the "crawling order" was Dyer's scheme for punishing anyone with a brown skin for the crime of her unknown assailants. The official report, while admitting the existence of this order, did not make it clear that

Indians—especially leading men in politics or public life—were dragged from all over the town to glut the sadism of those who invented this loathsome method of vengeance. The people were also compelled to “salaam” to every British soldier they met, while other refinements of degradation were enforced by the whip and the bullet.

<sup>59</sup> Major Carbury, questioned by the Hunter Commission regarding the bombing of villages by aeroplanes, replied: “I was trying to do this in their own interests.” (Hunter Report, p. 133.) The High School at Khalsa was one of the places bombed with this humanitarian intention.

<sup>60</sup> Terrorism was not confined to the Punjab. It was also officially admitted that fourteen persons were killed and sixty wounded at Delhi, whilst at Ahmedabad twenty-eight were killed and 123 wounded, in each case by firing on Indian demonstrations which clashed with the military forces.

<sup>61</sup> *The Case for India*, by John S. Hoyland (London, 1929), pp. 17–18. “In one city at least,” writes Mr. Hoyland, “banners were hung out of windows bearing the words ‘Remember the Punjab.’ There was a general feeling that happenings at Amritsar rendered rejoicings over the defeat of Prussianism in the War, to say the least of it, inopportune.”

<sup>62</sup> It is noteworthy that even the mild “punishment” of General Dyer was condemned by a resolution in the House of Lords, while £20,000 was raised for him by public subscription in honour of his heroic conduct at Jalianwala Bagh and his enforcement of the Crawling Order.

<sup>63</sup> Mr. Palme Dutt in his book *Modern India* (London, 1926), quotes Sir Michael as having spoken to the Society of Authors of “our duty to our imperial position, to our kinsfolk in India and to the thousand millions of British capital invested in India.” The Amritsar massacre was no doubt the fulfilment of this duty.

<sup>64</sup> According to Miss Beauchamp, who is by no means favourable to the Congress, its registered membership by 1921 had reached 10,000,000 (*British Imperialism in India*, p. 176). She asserts that “its nation-wide propaganda organisation” was “sweeping Indians of all classes—peasants, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals and workers—into Congress activities.” As the adherents of a party, even in a highly organised community, commonly number at least ten to every one party member, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Congress had by 1921 at least 100,000,000 supporters, the rest of the people (apart from Indian princes, landlords, officials, etc.) being mainly apathetic through ignorance. Actual membership of the Congress is naturally restricted in India among the masses by the fact that it exposes the individual to considerable risks, especially in times of political disturbance, when he may be victimised by the police.

<sup>65</sup> *India and the World*. Essays by Jawaharlal Nehru (London, 1936), pp. 172–6. The whole of this short essay on Gandhi should be read carefully by every serious student of Indian problems.

Many writers, both imperialist and communist, seem to assume that Gandhi is the conscious tool of Indian capitalism; though precisely what he has to gain has never been made clear. Miss Beauchamp in *British Imperialism in India*, even finds fault with the poor man for failing to protest against the Meerut sentences at a time when he was in jail and therefore debarred from political activity.



<sup>66</sup> "Gandhi," writes Nehru, "has played a revolutionary role in India of the greatest importance because he knew how to make the most of the objective conditions and could reach the hearts of the masses."

A more idealistic view of Gandhi is given by Romain Rolland in his book *Mahatma Gandhi*; but M. Rolland would probably agree to-day with Nehru's more judicious assessment of his importance.

<sup>67</sup> Nehru develops this idea further by comparing the alignment of forces in the Congress with the "Popular Fronts" of contemporary Europe. This question will be examined further in our final chapter.

<sup>68</sup> In order not to fill up these pages unnecessarily with "atrocities" and details of repression, no account is given here of the Government's measures in 1921-2; they were similar to the general scheme of repression adopted in 1930. (See Chapter XV.)

<sup>69</sup> Civil disobedience was to have begun with a refusal of the land tax, started locally in Bardoli. Gandhi has often been censured for stopping the civil disobedience movement in 1922; and probably from most standpoints he was mistaken. It is, however, hardly fair criticism to blame Gandhi for the various checks to this movement and give him no credit for having started it. Manifestly no single individual could have exercised such power in checking such a vast movement had not the movement itself owed its existence very largely (as is almost universally acknowledged) to his personal inspiration.

<sup>70</sup> It was to this constitution that the National Joint Council of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress referred when they refused to champion the Indian masses in 1922 and advised them to apply to those "Parliamentary institutions recently conferred on India, by means of which grievances should be ventilated and wrongs redressed."

<sup>71</sup> In two of these Provincial Councils Englishmen were appointed by the Government to "represent" Labour. Madras, Burma and the U.P. had no Labour representatives at all.

<sup>72</sup> The departments placed under the control of the Provincial Councils were Local Government, Sanitation, Agriculture, Fisheries, Co-operation and Industries. Education, apart from certain specified schools and universities, was also placed under Council control, the necessary money for education being made dependent on the Excise, which was also transferred to the control of the Councils. The Councils were thus placed in the ambiguous position of having to raise the necessary funds for their schools from a liquor traffic which they wanted to abolish.

<sup>73</sup> This is still the case under the new Constitution. (See Chapter XV.) Considering their limitations, it must be admitted that these Indian legislatures have done credit to themselves. Dr. V. H. Rutherford in *Modern India* (London, 1927) noted the superiority of the Indian politicians to the British ministers in every particular. (See pp. 82-84.)

<sup>74</sup> The only important innovation under the Labour Government of 1924 was the promulgation of the Bengal Ordinance. Like the Rowlatt Acts and similar special measures adopted in 1930 and 1932, this Ordinance permitted arrest without warrant and indefinite detention without trial. A Bill to embody this Ordinance in the permanent laws of the Province was introduced into the Bengal Legislative Council (in March 1925) where it was rejected.

An India Office communiqué of October 27th, 1924, stated that the Viceroy had promulgated the Bengal Ordinance "with the authority

of His Majesty's Government" (i.e., the Labour Government) and *The Times* of October 27th, 1924, reported that fifty-six arrests had been made almost immediately, after extensive house searches.

<sup>75</sup> *Documents concerning the Origin and Purpose of the Indian Statutory Commission*. (Published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. March, 1930, p. 183.)

<sup>76</sup> These were "Our Right Trusty and Well-Beloved Counsellor, Stephen Walsh" and "Our Trusty and Well-Beloved Clement Richard Attlee Esquire." The Trusty and Well-Beloved Walsh being ill, his place was taken by the Right Honourable Vernon Hartshorn.

<sup>77</sup> The history of the Bardoli tax-strike is told by Mr. Mahadev Desai in *The Story of Bardoli* (Ahmedabad, 1929), which is a complete and well-documented account. When the Government seized the movable property of the peasants and tried to sell it, the auctions were boycotted. Attempts to sell land were even more unsuccessful, for only people from a distance (mainly Government employees) would buy the land; and when they did so no labourer would work for them nor would any local people trade or have any dealings with them.

<sup>78</sup> *The Indian Ferment*, p. 111.

<sup>79</sup> The recommendations of the Simon Commission are not dealt with here, as they proved to be so reactionary that even the Government had to go considerably beyond them in order to make terms with the Indian propertied classes.

<sup>80</sup> The negotiations of the Congress leaders and others with the Viceroy were considered by the present author in the *Political Quarterly* (April, 1930). The actual history of subsequent events is, however, the best commentary on the Government's terms as expressed through Lord Irwin. Mr. MacDonald, in a letter to Mr. Baldwin dated November 11th, 1929, stated that "the answer to both parts of the question, whether the Viceroy's declaration implies any change in the policy hitherto declared or in the time when this status may be attained, is 'No'." (*Daily Herald*, November 12th, 1929.) Further comments and facts will be found in Chapter XV.

<sup>81</sup> Congress was at this time dominated by a powerful combination consisting of Gandhi and the two Nehrus ("the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," as their enemies styled them). For a good evaluation of nationalism in the 'twenties see Alexander's comparison in *The Indian Ferment* (p. 201).

<sup>82</sup> See *In India*, by G. W. Steevens (London, 1889), pp. 324, 325, 329. It should be noted that the peasant requires salt for his cattle as well as for himself; and the cost of it, though small to European eyes, is an important item in an Indian peasant's budget. It is also generally considered that (owing to difference in diet) the poor consume more salt per head than the wealthier people. For comparison it may be remembered that in the French Revolution the salt tax was by popular demand among the first to be abolished. Scawen Blunt gives further information on the Indian salt tax in his *India Under Rihon*. In the nineteenth century corporal punishment was inflicted in Madras for the procurement of salt other than that manufactured by the Government. (See Dutt, Vol II, p. 151.)

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter XV.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

ON September 13th, 1932, the world was informed that Mr. M. K. Gandhi, a prisoner detained in Yerawda Jail during His Majesty's pleasure, had been communicating with the British Government for several months regarding an ultimatum unprecedented in the history of politics, which he had issued to them.

The ultimatum concerned the question of separate electorates for the "Depressed Classes" of India. The "threat" by which the Indian leader sought to bend the will of the British Government was simply that unless the schemes for such separate electorates were abandoned he would starve himself to death.

"Untouchability" is one of the worst evils of Hinduism: in Gandhi's own words it is "a corroding poison that is eating into the vitals of Hindu society." Like most social institutions it had its origin in something that was at one time progressive. The Aryan conquerors of India had, and still preserve to a large degree, in spite of their poverty, a civilisation that placed the highest emphasis upon personal cleanliness.<sup>1</sup> They found and subdued earlier races whose civilisation was less advanced. Like the white races in Africa, they were desperately anxious to preserve their own civilisation and "race purity" among those whom they regarded as their inferiors. Like the white races in Africa, or the white Americans in their relations with the Negro, these Aryans became arrogant and cruel as a result. They thought of these "untouchables" (as they became) much in the way that a white planter thinks of a "nigger."<sup>2</sup> Marriage or even social contact became unthinkable. If they avoided excesses equivalent to lynching, they made up for their moderation in that direction by a refinement of spiritual

torture. "Untouchability" became part of their religion, and in this they even in some respects excelled the Negrophobia of the white man. The ban on Negroes in "white" churches is not a universal or officially recognised part of the Christian religion; but "untouchability" was rigidly adhered to by the Brahmin priests, and no "Untouchable" was allowed in a Hindu temple.

The number of these "Untouchables" in India is variously estimated, being between 40 and 60 millions, out of a total population of about 350 millions.<sup>3</sup> Any exact estimate is impossible, owing to the variation in actual practice, the south of India being on the whole far more rigid in its adherence to the rules of caste. We must, of course, remember that a Christian or a Moslem is also an "Untouchable" from the Hindu point of view, since neither observes what Hindu law considers the rules of personal hygiene. For this reason any Hindu who leaves his country and lives abroad must necessarily break caste<sup>4</sup>—as Gandhi himself did when he came as a young man to study law in London. Probably the much larger proportion of Mohammedans in the North of India has accustomed Hindus in the more northerly provinces to a loosening of caste restrictions, just as it has led, on the other hand, to the system of *pardah* (veiling and seclusion of women) which many Hindus in the North have borrowed from the Moslems.

Every effort having been made in this country to represent Gandhi as the champion of Brahminism and the opponent of the Depressed Classes, we may begin by noting the views of two Englishmen, of whom one is a definite opponent of Gandhi's political views and the other a missionary and a political "moderate."

The first quotation is from a letter written by Dr. Westcott, Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India. Whilst condemning the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Bishop spoke of himself as

"One who has known the Mahatma for some years and who deeply appreciated the service he was rendering for the social uplift of the Depressed Classes and for racial unity in India. As a social reformer he had my whole-hearted support. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

The second quotation is from the pen of the Rev. R. M. Gray, a former missionary, who knows Gandhi and India from personal experience. Writing in *Social Service*,<sup>6</sup> Mr. Gray said:

"Mr. Gandhi deserves the name of Mahatma if for no other reason than that he has taken upon his heart the misery of the *outcastes*. . . . From his boyhood this has seemed to Mr. Gandhi an intolerable wrong. He calls it the open sore of India, the scandal of her social life. . . . At a meeting gathered to hear him speak he noticed that the *outcastes* were put in an inferior place by themselves. At once he rose up, took his place among them, and, sitting there, gave his address. He never wearies of urging his countrymen by pen and speech to put away this curse. He has brought upon himself the anger of the orthodox, but he cares not for that. . . . And there is no doubt that he has stirred the conscience of India."

Years ago Gandhi gave up an income of about £3,000 a year in order to live among his poor countrymen in South Africa, and help them in their difficulties. He teaches work, and works himself continually. He believes in simplicity, and has renounced all luxuries. Therefore, as his own *ashram* (or religious and social settlement) at Sabarmati was intended as a training ground for his followers, "Untouchables" came to live there as members of his little community.

When these "Untouchables" first came to the *ashram* there was much opposition from the orthodox, and Gandhi has told the story in his autobiography.<sup>7</sup> He tells how he had difficulty with a neighbour who partly controlled the well from which the water for the *ashram* was drawn, and how the man in charge of the water-lift was violent and abusive. This opposition was worn down by Gandhi's non-violent resistance—or "persistence" would perhaps be a better term—and finally "the man became ashamed and ceased to bother us."

But the wealthy, orthodox Hindus refused to give support to such a blasphemous institution, and serious financial difficulties arose, accompanied by the threat of a social

boycott. When Gandhi's nephew Maganlal came to him one day and said: "We are out of funds, and there is nothing for the next month," Gandhi told him that in that case they would go to the "Untouchables'" quarter, where they could live by manual labour. Then financial help came unexpectedly, and the *ashram* was able to continue its work. In the years that followed Gandhi adopted an "Untouchable" daughter, who grew up in the *ashram* as a symbol of the unity that Gandhi was trying to bring about.

The stress that Gandhi himself lays on this personal aspect of his work may seem strange to an Englishman. Its importance in a country like India cannot possibly be over-estimated. Within a few years his personal influence and example swung the National Movement over from a constitutional to a (politically) revolutionary programme, though the methods he advocated were unexampled in the history of revolutions. From being to a very large extent a group of unemployed intellectuals, who concerned themselves with "the Indianisation of the Services" the All-India National Congress became a mass movement concerned with the achievement of power by the Indian people. Its members resigned Government offices and refused privileges. The turning-point in this vital transformation of the movement was reached at the annual meeting of the Congress at Nagpur in 1920, when the leading political organisation of India followed Gandhi's lead and declared war on "Untouchability." *But for this, the various Civil Disobedience Movements in the form which they took could never have taken place*, and India would still be relegated to the bored discussions of a half-empty House of Commons for one evening in the year.<sup>8</sup>

In March, 1931, the Congress amplified its social policy in a Declaration of Rights, drawn up by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Socialist leader, in conjunction with Gandhi, as the basis of any constitution to which Congress would agree. This declaration included adult suffrage, free primary education, and statutory rights for the Depressed Classes on every point with regard to which they have suffered from disabilities.

Few men have realised as Gandhi has done the dual process that is necessary in a mass peasant movement. Social

reform will always be inadequate and largely impossible while political power remains in the hands of an autocratic and unsympathetic Government. But on the other hand, no mass movement can gather force sufficient to dislodge such a Government unless it is self-critical and self-disciplined. Gandhi's social programme has therefore a value in itself and a political value also. It claims to be the maximum that can be achieved by the Indian people for themselves short of the control of their own political and economic life, and within the limits of nationalist ideology this claim is probably true. This social programme is not intended as an *alternative* to political freedom and economic justice, but as a measure of self-discipline by which the Indian labourers and peasants will be better able to grapple with their greater problem; and it is intended to go on side by side with the struggle for political power.

The five main points in Gandhi's social programme are:

1. Hindu-Moslem unity and brotherhood.
2. *Abolition of "Untouchability."*
3. Abolition of *purdah* and the recognition of sex equality.
4. Abstinence from drink and drugs.<sup>9</sup>
5. Revival of the peasant crafts of hand-spinning and hand-weaving as supplementary industries alleviating the chronic and almost universal unemployment among the peasants during the summer months.<sup>10</sup>

The last point could be explained in much greater detail than is possible within the scope of this chapter. It is the origin of the *Khadi* or *Khaddar* Movement so little understood in England. It is hard for us to understand the relative values of things in a country where the average income *per caput* is about 3½d. a day; for poverty as we know it in England bears no relation to the poverty of India. The poor of India are almost literally skeletons, and it is these, including the greater number of the "Untouchables," that the *Khaddar* Movement claims to assist.

This social programme has been advocated by Gandhi and his followers all over India, by precept and example. They go from village to village, preaching their gospel and founding schools and other centres, especially for the

Depressed Classes. Even the Marquis of Dufferin seems to have got a glimpse of this on his tour with the Lothian Committee, which in the nature of things had little chance to learn very much, as it was boycotted by most people in India except the handful of Government supporters. The Marquis tells of his visits to various villages with the Commission, and of their reception. In one of these villages, he says:<sup>11</sup>

"We tested out the proposed system of indirect election, by getting about twenty villagers together and asking them to elect a representative. To our surprise a Dom, a complete 'Untouchable,' was elected. When asked why, an old Brahmin replied sententiously that 'A Dom serves all, and is therefore to be honoured.' We learnt subsequently that intensive Congress propaganda had been at work in this district *in preparation for our arrival*. But the incident is interesting as showing how powerfully propaganda can affect the village life, and how the left-wing of Congress is drifting towards the doctrines of Communism."

The only comment necessary is on the words that have been italicised. Those who know the work that the All-India National Congress has been doing for years among the villagers will be amazed at the assumption of the Committee that this propaganda was "in preparation for their arrival." The conceit of this supposition is no less remarkable than the ignorance it implies; for the Congress policy was to *boycott* the Committee, and the only strange thing in the story is that a village so well-educated by Congress workers should have responded to the Committee's questions at all.<sup>12</sup>

A cartoon from one of the leading nationalist papers in 1932 illustrates aptly the spirit of the age in India. It appeared in the *Free Press Journal*<sup>13</sup> and depicts a steam-roller labelled "Social Reform" moving along the road that leads to "National Unity." Right in the path of the steam-roller squats "Orthodoxy," a fat and repulsive Brahmin priest, to whom "Progressive Hinduism" (a *Khaddar*-clad figure in a "Gandhi cap") is saying: "He won't stop anyway. If you persist you'll simply get run



To understand the whole problem we must next examine briefly the attitude of the Government towards the Depressed Classes. So much has been made in England and other countries of the alleged danger to the Depressed Classes in India of "Brahmin rule," that few pause to consider whether and in what way the present Government protects these classes.

Those who have examined closely the relationship between the Government and the Indian princes may well wonder how the power which protects these autocrats from rebellion and has earned from them such unqualified admiration and loyalty can at the same time be the protector of the poor and oppressed.<sup>15</sup> The Indian "loyalists" (who formed the great majority of those nominated by the Viceroy to attend the Round Table Conference) will be found to consist almost entirely of rajas and their immediate retainers, landlords, Indians in Government service, and a certain section of the commercial and industrial community. These classes, whatever small concessions they may demand, have stood solidly for British rule in one form or another.

This point is important, because behind this loyalty there is a reason, and the only obvious reason is that the Government stands in all social matters for "non-intervention" and the maintenance of the *status quo*.<sup>16</sup> The changes that the Nationalists contemplate are disturbing to the propertied and privileged classes in India; and with the exception of some of the mill-owners (whose interests are more complicated) the upper classes become increasingly "loyal" as the Congress becomes increasingly revolutionary in its social outlook. Individuals in the Government and in the services may genuinely wish for reforms; but they dare not offend their only Indian supporters and give strength to a social revolution that would engulf both themselves and their allies. Theirs is the fate of every alien and despotic Government, which is so much concerned with maintaining its authority that the maintenance of that authority ("law and order") becomes its chief object; consequently social changes are looked at with suspicion as possible sources of disruption. What the Nationalist Movement cannot achieve for lack of political power the

Government dare not attempt for fear of political upheaval.<sup>17</sup> The long opposition of the Government to the Sarda Act (urged and eventually passed in the Legislative Assembly by the Indian Social Reformers to prohibit child marriage) is a well-known instance of this.

Mr. J. C. Curry's book on *The Indian Police* illustrates this point strikingly with reference to the Depressed Classes. The book is written by a former member of the Service and carries the hall-mark of imperial approval—an appreciative preface by Lord Lloyd. In several passages Mr. Curry stresses the fact that the police force itself is built up on the caste system, claiming that this encouragement and utilisation of a system we profess to abhor "has secured a standard of efficiency which would have been unattainable in any other way."<sup>18</sup> On the same page he admits that "men of the menial classes have been debarred from enlisting as constables or as combatants in the Indian Army," adding a little later that "the same conditions have had the same consequences in all the Services, in the Army, in the magistracy, and even in the technical services, where professional qualifications must be reinforced by social standing."

Mr. Curry insists on this point in several passages, remarking in one place that the authorities

"have suggested that when Hindu opinion generally has no objection to a man of high caste being touched or to his house being searched by such a man (i.e., an 'Untouchable'), there will be no difficulty in the way of their employment."<sup>19</sup>

It does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Curry that in India house-searching to-day is a common Government practice to which Hindu opinion has a very great objection indeed, even though it is carried out by policemen of irreproachable social standing.

In the education of the Depressed Classes the Government has shown very little initiative. The Indian States (ruled by autocratic princes who enjoy the support of the British Army against any attempt to remove them) are no models of good government, and must never be considered

as examples of that *Swaraj* (self-government) of which Gandhi said: "Swaraj does not mean a transfer of power from a white bureaucracy to a brown bureaucracy." Nevertheless, the advances in education made in *some* of these States indicate what *could* have been done in British India; and Baroda State showed till recently a higher percentage of educated "Untouchables" than the educated percentage of the total population of the entire country.<sup>20</sup>

In the constitutional reforms the same attitude is to be found. The Montagu-Chelmsford Constitution gave limited powers to Indian Councils and an Indian Legislative Assembly, but these bodies were elected on a property franchise which gave the vote only to 3 per cent of the population. In these councils and in the Assembly the "Untouchables" were entirely unrepresented, save for two or three members *nominated by the Government itself* who would have formed a helpless and negligible minority among all the landlords, British and Indian capitalists, Government nominees, etc., even if they had been real representatives. With these legislative bodies Gandhi always refused co-operation.

When the Government's attitude to the "Untouchables" is compared with that of Gandhi and the Congress, it is easy to understand where the political sympathies of these classes lie.<sup>21</sup>

In recent years desperate efforts have been made by the Government to counter the effect of this contrast by extending its favour towards distinguished individuals who have "risen" from the ranks of the Depressed Classes; and societies (with a few hundred members) have been formed under the leadership of persons nominated by the Government to the legislatures.<sup>22</sup>

These societies commonly bear such pretentious titles that their resolutions and decisions are apt to be quite misunderstood in England, yet they are solemnly cabled to this country as evidence of the loyalty of the "Untouchables" to the Government. A single example will suffice to illustrate this fact.

When Gandhi marched to the sea in 1930 in order to break the salt law, few English people knew that thousands

sat all night by the roadside (a fact for which the present author can vouch personally) and that the crowd which lined the road for the first three miles alone was generally estimated at about 100,000.<sup>23</sup> But most English papers published an account of a "counter-Satyagraha" that was to be made by "the Untouchables," against Gandhi. The "counter-Satyagraha" was certainly threatened and given much publicity by the pro-Government Press, but all that ever came of it was a visit to Gandhi at Karadi *by the two men who had proposed it.*

Instead, the Depressed Classes, wherever they had been roused by Gandhi's workers from the apathy of political and social degradation, came into the struggle and took their part in it. They did not work side by side with the high-caste Hindus under a *separate* organisation, as some of the Moslems did. The Congress programme for the "Untouchables" has always been one of merging them with the rest of the Hindu community. The distinction between Hindu and Moslem can be recognised and accepted, though in politics it may prove extremely undesirable. *But the distinction between caste and out-caste cannot under any circumstances be recognised as valid by any sincere social reformer*—a fact which we must grasp clearly in order to understand the issue of separate electorates.

This merging of the "Untouchables" with the caste Hindus in the national struggle makes it difficult to point to any distinctive and separate exploits of the Depressed Classes during the Civil Disobedience Movement. It becomes a question of weighing up general impressions, and those recorded by "partisan" writers on either side should be compared with the statement made by an English bank manager<sup>24</sup> in Bombay that "Hindus in Gujerat, from Gandhi down to the meanest member of the Depressed Classes, are solid in their demand." Impartial observers in 1930 reported the same impression from all parts of the country.

Even in the British Press, where every effort has been made to represent the national movement as the work of a handful of lawyers and students, the social character and mass support of the movement have occasionally evaded the vigilance of the editors. Thus a paragraph in the

*Evening News*<sup>25</sup> informed us on one occasion that "Police came into contact with a mob of low-caste natives," who were breaking the forest laws in one of the Indian jungles—a form of civil disobedience advocated by Congress. The very extent of the Civil Disobedience Movement in spite of the unparalleled repression is sufficient proof that no large section of the populace can have held aloof or proved actively hostile. The crowds, huge beyond description, and held in perfect discipline by Congress volunteers—the nation-wide boycott—the entire absence of any effective counter-demonstration—the small, cheap prints of Gandhi in the huts of the poorest peasants—these, and innumerable other evidences can be cited by those who watched the struggle in 1930 to prove the universal support that Gandhi had at that time among the masses.<sup>26</sup>

In March, 1931, Gandhi signed a pact with Lord Irwin, then Viceroy of India, whereby he agreed to persuade his followers to suspend the Civil Disobedience Campaign in order that he might come to London and negotiate with the Government at the Round Table Conference.

The first session of the Conference had already met without the co-operation of Gandhi and the Congress. The terms of reference had proved unsatisfactory, and the Government's general policy had not been considered such as to endorse the *bona-fides* of its intentions.<sup>27</sup> It had been a packed Conference of the Viceroy's nominees, hopelessly overweighted with the same vested interests that filled the Legislative Assembly and the Chamber of Princes, together with chosen "communalists"—men who (in the name of the Moslem masses, the Depressed Classes, and other minorities, whose rank and file and real leaders were mostly with the Congress) wrangled about jobs and privileges for their various cliques.

It is impossible here to discuss in detail the nature and origin of the interests that crossed one another at that Conference, in what one of the European delegates himself described as "a maze of back-stair intrigue."<sup>28</sup> The question with which we are concerned at the moment is that of Gandhi and the Depressed Classes; and it is necessary to concentrate attention on what was termed the "Minorities Pact."

This pact was made during the 1931 sessions of the Conference, that is to say, when Gandhi himself was present. We must bear in mind that the "delegates" to this Conference were in no true sense delegates or even representatives. Each one represented *some* interest, if only his own; but his right to be present at the Conference was the right of nomination by the Viceroy; and barely half-a-dozen of those present could make any demonstrable claim to represent any considerable section of Indian opinion, even of the communities for which they were supposed to speak.

How much the great majority of these "delegates" really cared for Indian freedom may be judged from the main drift of the Conference. Instead of insisting on settling first the vital question of independence and turning later to points of constitutional detail, they allowed the main issue to remain unsolved and fell to bargaining for power among themselves. The delegates had not been selected by the Viceroy without good reason, for the Conference brought India into contempt. To quote Mr. Benthall's secret circular once more, the Conference was "staged as part of Great Britain's set policy"; its value was its "educative effect" on the British public, "who were able *with the help of the Press*<sup>29</sup> to appreciate better than they had ever done before how impossible some of the demands were that were put forward."

Mr. Benthall himself, as a representative of the European Association, was a signatory of the "Minorities Pact," to which great publicity was given. The other signatories were those of the Anglo-Indian delegates, an Indian Christian delegate, and the delegates supposed to represent the Depressed Classes and the Moslem minority.<sup>30</sup> The Moslem signatory was the Aga Khan, who is certainly much better known to the European turf fraternity than he is to India. The signatory for the Depressed Classes was Dr. Ambedkar, whose chief claim to fame is his record as a Government nominee in the Legislative Council of Bombay.<sup>31</sup>

The signatories claimed to represent 46 per cent. of the Indian people, the greater part of which percentages was

made up of Moslems and the "Untouchables." The foolishness of the claim was exposed by the counter-claim of the women delegates, who, by opposing the pact, concluded logically that 46 per cent was thereby reduced to 23 per cent. Even while the pact was being signed the North-West Frontier Province, where the Moslems number over 90 per cent of the population, was organising under the greatest of the Moslem Nationalist leaders, whose arrest soon afterwards precipitated the renewal of the Congress Campaign.<sup>32</sup>

The clauses in the "Minorities Pact" included the assumption of powers of veto in "Governors," ruling out by inference any thought of independence. They endorsed the claims advanced by the Europeans and Anglo-Indians for the safeguarding of their privileges—that is to say, in the greater opportunities offered to them of public offices (with higher pay) and the privileges they enjoy with regard to law courts, State scholarships and other matters.<sup>33</sup> *And they agreed to accept and champion one another's claims for separate electorates.*

Gandhi's position at the Conference was clear. Alone of all the "delegates" he could claim to represent the Indian masses, and held the mandate of Congress to press the minimum claim that could bring any real self-government to the people of India—independence and universal suffrage without discrimination. On the subject of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes his reply was clear and unequivocal. Speaking in answer to Dr. Ambedkar at the last meeting of the Minorities Committee<sup>34</sup> he said:

"I would not sell the vital interests of the 'Untouchables' even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, to represent the vast mass of the 'Untouchables.' Here I speak not merely on behalf of the Congress, but I speak on my own behalf, and I claim that I would get, if there was a referendum of the 'Untouchables,' their vote, and that I would top the poll. . . . *We do not want on our register and on our census 'Untouchables' classified as a separate class.*"<sup>35</sup> Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Will 'Untouchables' remain 'Un-

touchables' in perpetuity? *I would rather that Hinduism died than that Untouchability lived. . . . I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. . . . I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life."*

Seldom in his career has Gandhi spoken as forcibly as he did in resisting what he called the "perpetuation of the bar sinister" of the "Untouchables." He knew that separate electorates must stabilise Untouchability as a permanent factor in Indian life. His own method—of adult suffrage without discrimination—would have had the effect of compelling any caste Hindu who wished to secure the support of "Untouchables" in an election to break with all the traditions of orthodoxy. He stood by it firmly, rejecting summarily the offer of the Prime Minister to "arbitrate" between the rights of the Depressed Classes and the claims of the Government's nominees.

Every effort was made by interested parties to enhance the effect created at the Round Table Conference—that Gandhi had opposed the representative of the Depressed Classes in the interests of the high-caste Hindus. The clash was so reported by all the British daily papers as to give this impression; and in India the same effort was made to create this impression among the "Untouchables" themselves.

In spite of this the great majority of the "Untouchables" made it clear that they supported Gandhi. On Gandhi's return to India a few hundred were persuaded to demonstrate against him at Bombay; but though the incident formed the chief news in the British papers, concerning his arrival, the account given by Verrier Elwin confirms the unanimous evidence of Indian witnesses (and the camera) that this small disturbance was negligible compared with the colossal and largely spontaneous demonstration of welcome with which the Indian masses greeted the national leader.<sup>36</sup> It is at least significant that the Bombay Government, followed by most of the other provincial Governments, banned the films that were taken of this demonstration. Moreover (according to the *Associated Press*, in a cable that was not published in the English papers):



"A deputation of sixty members representing over forty Depressed Classes associations presented an address to Mr. Gandhi on his return to Bombay. The address referred to Mr. Gandhi's labours for the uplift of "Untouchables" and his making the removal of Untouchability a fundamental issue, and hailed him as their only representative and saviour."

With very few exceptions, the "Untouchables'" organisations in every part of India repudiated the Minorities Pact in public meetings, and by large majorities. Within a few weeks it was clear that the Depressed Classes repudiated Ambedkar's policy and under the leadership of M. C. Rajah were declaring for joint electorates with reservation of seats—a policy upon which Mr. Rajah reached agreement with the caste Hindus.

The problem of the Indian Minorities had long been settled, so far as the Moslems were concerned, in an agreement between Gandhi and the late Dr. Ansari, who (as leader of the Nationalist Moslems) could speak with authority for the Moslem masses. February, 1932, saw the problem of the Depressed Classes dealt with equally well by Mr. Rajah. But those who were supposed to represent these minorities at St. James's Palace took an entirely different view of the matter, as we have seen; and the Government that appointed them was able to declare that a complete deadlock had been created, and that the British Cabinet would settle a question which Indians were incompetent to settle.

The "Communal Award," as this settlement was called, would require a complete book to itself if it were to be properly analysed, a fact which renders it the more infamous, in view of its essentially reactionary character. The papers of August 17th, 1932, had announced daring and drastic reforms, with "Plural Voting for the Depressed Classes"; and the proposals were favourably reviewed in those journals which the Englishman habitually regards as progressive.<sup>37</sup> But the proposed communal settlement could only be understood if studied in conjunction with the Lothian Report. According to this document, which was actually regarded as "advanced" in British political circles,

only 14 per cent of India's population was to be enfranchised in the Provincial Legislatures.<sup>38</sup> Under the Government's "Communal Award," seventy-one seats in the Provincial Councils were to be allotted to the enfranchised members of the Depressed Classes, *out of a total of 1,748 seats.*<sup>39</sup> That is to say, a section of the community which is estimated at between 15 per cent and 25 per cent of the population was to be safeguarded by 4 per cent of the seats being allotted to its own privileged members. This was what Gandhi described as "sheer finookery."

The vast majority of the "Untouchables," far from enjoying "plural voting," would have no vote at all. Those of the Depressed Classes whom the Government considered "fit" to vote would find the number of seats allotted to their separate electorates hopelessly exceeded by those of the propertied classes. An instance of the allocation of seats that will make this principle understood to British readers is the distribution as between Capital and Labour in Bengal: "Commerce, Industry, Mining and Planting" in this province are allowed nineteen seats—Labour (that is to say, such workers as the Government thinks fit for the franchise) is given eight.

Separate electorates as offered in the "Communal Award" would therefore not only have "perpetuated the bar sinister" for the Depressed Classes, but they would have proved the very negation of democracy.<sup>40</sup> M. C. Rajah's comment, as President of the All-India Depressed Classes Association, was: "Our cause has been injured beyond repair by the Minorities Pact."

The following extracts from the correspondence between Gandhi and the Government should be noted in illustration of this point. Mr. MacDonald, in his cable of September 8th, 1932, said: "The proportion of their special seats is everywhere much below the population percentage of the Depressed Classes."<sup>41</sup> To this Gandhi replied on September 9th:

"I should not be against even over-representation of 'Depressed' Classes. What I am against is their statutory separation, even in a limited form, from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. . . .

"As your letter may give rise to a misunderstanding, I wish to state that the fact of my having isolated for special treatment the 'Depressed' Classes question from other parts of your decision does not in any way mean that I approve of or am reconciled to the other parts of the decision."

In the British Press Gandhi's Fast was generally represented as a political manoeuvre against the Depressed Classes. Thus one writer described it as "Mr. Gandhi's attempt to thwart the emancipation of the Untouchables."<sup>42</sup> Another, with more elaboration, proclaimed that:

"It is, therefore, small wonder that Mr. Gandhi views a reform that shall make Jack as good as his master as vitiating the Hindu vision which keeps its slaves in their place. Moreover, so deep, so spiritual in many ways, is the abhorrence of the high caste for the low, that we of the West cannot possibly understand it."<sup>43</sup>

Occasional paragraphs stood out in odd contrast to this. Thus Miss Ellen Wilkinson, a Labour M.P., cabled the *Daily Herald* from Calcutta:

"As delegates of the India League, we have visited many villages, and the mass of untouchables regard Gandhi as their only saviour, and separate electorates as perpetuating their untouchable status."<sup>44</sup>

In the same number of the *Daily Herald* there appeared the following news:

"To-day from up and down India, reports are coming in that the orthodoxy of centuries is giving way before Mr. Gandhi's sacrifice of himself.

"Not only is the sacred Kali Ghat temple at Calcutta to be thrown upon to-morrow to all Hindus, but in many other parts of India temples and wells are being thrown open to untouchables."

This information, which appeared in several other papers, was curiously re-inforced by an article in the *Sunday Express*. On September 18th, Charles M. Sellick, who had represented that paper for four years in Bombay, wrote with his usual anti-Indian bias, but nevertheless admitted of Gandhi that:

"The immense influence he possesses has never been adequately realized by the Government either of India or of England. He has done enough damage to British prestige and British interests not to let him do any more. *He has promised the masses of India, whom he does undoubtedly represent, a Utopia in the form of an India for the Indians alone. . . . He has become a martyr to his millions of followers. Death will not remove the uncanny power of this amazing man.*"

Something of the general sympathy with this fast and its object may be gathered from the fact that nineteen mills in Bombay suspended work on the day that the fast was commenced, owing to the non-attendance of workers.<sup>45</sup> The anxiety of the Government, both with regard to the suppression of actual agitation and of news may be gathered from the following extracts:

"The Acting Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee and another Congress worker, described by the Public Prosecutor as the brains behind Congress activity, were tried and convicted in Bombay to-day. Outlining the case against the accused, the Prosecutor disclosed the clever net-work of the organisation, and also showed that business firms in Bombay were acting as dummy addresses for Congress communications. *It was shown also that weekly reports were issued for foreign centres.* An elaborate quarterly report on the activities of Congress had been prepared by the accused at the instance of Miss Slade.

"The Secretary of the Congress Committee said he was anxious to make the case for the prosecution as easy as possible. He was sentenced to one year and the second accused to six months."<sup>46</sup>

A few days later came the information that:

"The Government of Bombay to-day introduced in the Legislative Council at Poona a *Bill to stop hartals (strikes) and the boycott of European members of the cotton trade.*"<sup>47</sup>

The result of the fast was that separate electorates for the Depressed Classes were abandoned and an arrangement was made instead whereby the Untouchables secured a minimum

representation of over twice the number of seats which had been allocated to them under the Government's "Communal Award."<sup>48</sup> The cable of the Indian leaders to the Prime Minister (Mr. MacDonald) announced that:

"Seats for the representatives of the Depressed Classes in the Provincial Legislatures have been specifically fixed regarding each province. *The total number of seats in all the provinces, agreed upon, is 148 out of the general electorates, in substitution for the seventy one given by your decision. . . . India will now anxiously await your immediate action.*"<sup>49</sup>

This astonishing chapter of Indian history ends with the acceptance by the British Government of the scheme agreed upon by Gandhi, the national leaders and the Depressed Classes. It was by then the one hope that India would so much as look at the new constitution which was being forged in London; and the Government undoubtedly avoided a fresh Indian crisis by giving way in time.<sup>50</sup>

The problem of the Depressed Classes remained a real one which Indian nationalism could never completely liquidate. But a new force had already appeared in the field, the growth and influence of which will be the subject of our next chapter. That force was the tide of social revolt which in the present day threatens the Brahmin priesthood as much as it menaces the propertied classes and the Empire of Britain. As this chapter is being written much is being made in the Press of a foolish story that the Depressed Classes are about to join the Christian Church under the fictitious leadership of Dr. Ambedkar.<sup>51</sup> The truth is precisely the contrary; for in these outcastes of a great religion there will be found in the coming years the raw material of a mass movement that will turn its back upon all priesthood and its face towards Socialism.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Wilson in a footnote to Mill (Vol I, p. 340) refutes the charge that the Hindus are not a cleanly people, and compares them favourably with the nations of Southern Europe. He adds that "there are many of their practices which might be introduced even into the North with benefit."

A good Hindu bathes daily, always in running water, and he regards the Western habit of sitting in one's own bath-water with peculiar disgust. He is careful of his teeth, which he cleans regularly, and regards it as a religious duty to wash out his mouth after eating any food whatsoever. He regards with horror the Western habit of using paper for a cleansing process which, in his opinion, can only be properly effected with water; and he can never understand how it is that the Christian religion does not specifically enjoin the necessity of ablution after the performance of all natural functions.

<sup>2</sup> Those who have studied the treatment of Negroes both in the Southern States of America and in the Union of South Africa will find it astonishing that the white races should profess to be shocked at the treatment of "Untouchables" in India. It may be doubted whether the poorest classes in our own country are actually better treated than the Indian outcaste. Mr. H. H. Wilson pointed out over 100 years ago (and it is largely true to-day) that "the veriest *Chandala* who is one of a community, is less miserable, less unhappy, than many of the paupers of the civilised communities of Europe, with whom no man owns companionship or kindred; they are the true outcastes—not the Pariah or *Chandala*." (Footnote to Mill's *History*, Vol. I, p. 140.)

<sup>3</sup> The Lothian Committee showed that their numbers had been very variously estimated. (See p. 123 of the Report of the Indian Franchise Committee of 1932.) The Provincial Governments estimated 37.45 millions in 1932, but the 1931 census gives roughly 52 millions as the number.

<sup>4</sup> For purposes of comparison it should be noted that the desire of a British monarch in 1936 to marry outside his caste led to his abdication and caused a sensation which monopolised the attention of the Press for over a week.

<sup>5</sup> *Young India*, June 26th, 1930.

<sup>6</sup> September, 1931. These two quotations are selected from a host of similar ones by other writers simply because in neither case can the authority be dismissed as a "Gandhist." It is perhaps superfluous to remark that the present writer can confirm both these statements from his personal knowledge of Mr. Gandhi, but I cannot forbear from quoting as a final illustration of his attitude a letter that he wrote me soon after my arrival in India. I had written in jest about my own unsuccessful attempt to enter a Hindu temple, remarking that it was a proper penance for the arrogance of the English race: and his reply (dated Shahajarpur, Nov. 11th, 1929) contained the following paragraph: "You are charitable about your being debarred from temple entry and it is right for us all to be so towards one another. But the hideous truth is that this bar is a variety of the curse of untouchability."

<sup>7</sup> *My Experiments with Truth*, Vol II, in the Indian Edition.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in *The Government of India*, (pp. 43 and 51) says that "Parliament has not been a just and watchful steward of India. Its seats are empty when it has its annual saunter through the Indian Budget. . . . Very few members of Parliament have any real knowledge of Indian affairs."

Professor Thompson, who comments on the same fact in *The Other Side of the Medal*, mentions an M.P. who asked a friend of his: "What's happened to that fellow Gander—or some such name—who used to

give us so much trouble?" This was, of course, before the events of 1930-31, for which "that fellow Gander" and his colleagues were quietly preparing.

<sup>9</sup> The religion of both the Buddhists and the Moslems condemns the use of intoxicants. Hinduism is more generous, but strongly favours temperance. Warren Hastings said that "the temperance of the people of India is demonstrated in the simplicity of their food and their total abstinence from spirituous liquors and other substances of intoxication." To-day, however, the traffic in drink affords a considerable source of revenue to the Government, a fact which has made it a point of political attack. In a resolution passed in the Legislative Assembly in September, 1925, all the elected Indian members present, to the number of sixty-nine, voted for prohibition. The resolution was only opposed by the twenty-five Europeans present and fourteen Indian officials or Government nominees. The Assembly, however, was powerless to make its resolution effective. Some notes on the subject of "drugs" (i.e., principally opium) will be found in Chapter XIII.

<sup>10</sup> Sir Alfred Chatterton, C.I.E., says that "for nearly half the year the cultivators in most parts have little or no work." (*Journal of the East India Association*, July, 1930, p. 185.)

<sup>11</sup> Article in the *Spectator*, July 11th, 1932.

<sup>12</sup> As E. S. Montagu noted in his *Indian Diary*, with regard to a previous occasion, the stage-management of evidence for the Committee was the work of the Government. The Madras Railway Union protested against this in 1932 with special reference to Labour evidence, the witnesses being selected by employers so as to stifle the universal demand of organised Labour for Adult Suffrage. Similarly when a demand for joint electorates was put forward by the Depressed Classes in Bombay in a memorandum with 6,000 signatures, the Lothian Committee was not allowed to hear evidence on behalf of the signatories.

<sup>13</sup> June 6th, 1932.

<sup>14</sup> The interest of nationalists and socialists in the cause of the Depressed Classes has, of course, been the occasion of numerous slanderous statements. Jawaharlal Nehru was even accused in the *Bengal Administrative Report* for 1934-5 of misappropriating funds collected for the assistance of these classes. Nehru, who was then in England, denounced "this astounding and amazing lie" in the *Manchester Guardian* (December 10th, 1935), and enough publicity followed to force the withdrawal by the Bengal Government of its charges. They did not, however, apologise.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter XI, and Appendix.

<sup>16</sup> Missionary policy has been in many respects comparable to that of the Government. Kohloff and Horst, two great Protestant missionaries, took the view that "To charge Protestant missionaries with deviating from the scriptures because they allowed caste . . . to subsist, appears to us highly uncharitable. . . . We do not feel ourselves warranted to require of the higher ranks such an unscriptural surrender of their birthright, to which no nobleman or gentleman in our own country would submit." (Quoted in the *India Review*, July 23rd, 1932.)

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter XIII. Mr. J. A. Spender in *The Changing East* (pp. 157, 194), remarks that "only a Government trusted by Indians

and to a large extent manned by themselves will be able to combat the religious and caste prejudices which impede reform. . . . It is extremely difficult for the alien ruler, with his wholly different mentality, to identify himself with the life of India. . . . Fundamentally the case for Indian Home Rule rests on this radical fact." By way of exception, *sati* is almost the only social evil against which the Government has ever taken any action.

<sup>18</sup> *The Indian Police* (London, 1932), p. 76. The economic interests of the police have been carefully identified with the Government, for (as Mr. Curry shows) the principle has been followed since 1860 that "the pay of the lowest ranks shall be superior to that of an unskilled labourer." The same applies in the army to an even greater degree, as it is important to alienate the Services from the people in interest and sympathy.

<sup>19</sup> *The Indian Police*, p. 69.

The caste system is even kept up by the Government in the Indian jails; and in the Civil Disobedience Movement it was actually one of the complaints of political prisoners that they were not allowed to do scavenging unless they belonged to the appropriate strata of society. (See the *Bombay Chronicle*, December 26th, 1930.)

<sup>20</sup> In this State special efforts for the education of the Depressed Classes have been made since 1883. Free schools were opened in Baroda City and the principal towns, and even clothing, board and lodging were provided free. There has since been a steady progress in the facilities offered and a rise in the number of schools and scholars. In 1928-9 there were in the Baroda State 217 schools for the Depressed Classes, and the pupils attending numbered 9,533. In addition, 6,000 students belonging to the Depressed Classes were receiving instruction in the ordinary schools; 9.1 per cent of the total population of the Depressed Classes in the Baroda State were at that time educated, while the general percentage of the educated population in India was only 8.1, taking all classes together.

<sup>21</sup> In this connection it is not uninteresting to note that Miss Mayo, in *Mother India*, reported an alleged incident when a crowd of "Untouchables" is supposed to have given a spontaneous ovation to the Prince of Wales on his visit to India in 1921. This incident is entirely unknown in India, and Miss Mayo's assertion appears to be the only evidence of it ever having occurred.

<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, it may be noted the Government still gives to the police the right to arrest any "Untouchable" entering a Hindu temple.

<sup>23</sup> The size of these crowds (which the present author witnessed in every part of the country) was not more remarkable than their enthusiasm. Even the correspondent of *The Times* (January 3rd, 1930) recorded "the scenes of almost hysterical enthusiasm in the streets of Lahore" when the Congress met there at the end of 1929. It is interesting to contrast this description with the cheerful prophesies which had filled the British-owned Press before the event. All the British prophets had been agreed that Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs would tear each other in pieces. (See Chapter XII.)

<sup>24</sup> *Spectator*, July 26th, 1930.

<sup>25</sup> August 25th, 1930.



<sup>26</sup> This is written from the author's personal recollections of India in 1930. A description which I gave in a letter at that time, showing the extraordinary power of the Congress and the discipline it maintained, will be found in Mr. Brockway's book *The Indian Crisis*, pp. 160-161.

See also the final chapter of this book. The extent of the boycott may be studied in the Carnegie Endowment publication, *International Competition in the Trade of India*, by Professor Roorbach. (New York, March, 1931.)

<sup>27</sup> See the account in Chapter XV of the attitude of the Government and its measures of repression.

<sup>28</sup> E. C. Benthall's letter, secretly circulated by the "Royalist Association" of Calcutta, and published by the *Free Press Journal* of March 20th, 1932, without any denial or disclaimer from Mr. Benthall.

<sup>29</sup> Our own italics.

<sup>30</sup> There were two Indian Christian delegates. Of these one (a Roman Catholic) signed the "Pact." The other was Dr. Datta, who not only energetically repudiated the "Pact," but made it clear that he would never again be put in the false position of "representing" a community which had not chosen him.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Ambedkar affords probably the most perfect example of the Government's skill in using its nominees. A man without any popular following in India, he figures continually in the news as the "leader" of the "Untouchables."

<sup>32</sup> Abdul Ghaffar Khan, leader of the "Red Shirts" (a Moslem organisation affiliated to the Congress), and known as "The Gandhi of the Frontier."

<sup>33</sup> The existing law discriminates in many ways in favour of Europeans. In summary cases, for example, a European has the right of appeal, but an Indian has not. Such privileges were safeguarded by the "Pact."

<sup>34</sup> November 13th, 1931.

<sup>35</sup> This vital principle was recognised even by the Simon Commissioners (see Simon Report, Vol. II, p. 65), who remark that: "A separate electorate for Depressed Classes means, as a preliminary, a precise definition of all who are covered by the term. . . . *It means stigmatising each individual voter in the list, and militates against the process which is already beginning and which needs to be in every way encouraged—that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale.*" (Italics our own.)

<sup>36</sup> *Truth about India* (London, 1932), p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> See the *Daily Herald* of this date, in particular.

<sup>38</sup> The adult population of British India (i.e. over 20) is rather over half the total population. Hence the enfranchisement of 14 per cent leaves over 70 per cent of the adult population without a vote.

<sup>39</sup> The franchise system is too complicated for any brief analysis, but its net effect is to disqualify the mass of poor and illiterate workers and peasants. Some further notes on the new constitution will be given later. The Lothian Report explicitly states that: "*Property has from the outset been the main foundation of the franchise. . . . We propose accordingly to retain it both for the provincial and for the federal legislatures. But*

we have endeavoured to lower the property qualification so as to bring on to the roll the great bulk of the landholders, the tenants and the urban ratepayers, and a considerable section of the poorer classes." (Report of the Indian Franchise Committee, 1932, Vol I, pp. 34-5.) The "considerable section" of the poorer classes will be about 5 per cent, or less and their representation in proportion to their numbers will be negligible.

<sup>40</sup> The effect of these separate electorates, taken all over the country, is to give a statutory majority to the combined interests of the Indian landlords, the Indian middle-classes, and the Europeans; and the "Award" was immediately condemned on these grounds by the President and Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress, also by M. L. Joshi, a very right-wing reformist leader. (See *The Advocate* of Bombay, August 28th, 1932.)

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that this under-representation of the Depressed Classes was advanced by Mr. MacDonald as an argument in favour of accepting the scheme which he had devised.

<sup>42</sup> A reviewer in the *Observer*, September 25th, 1932.

<sup>43</sup> Sir George MacMunn in the same issue of the *Observer*. Sir George is the author of a book on *The Martial Races of India*, "the men whose hand can keep their head, to whom the Ghandis (sic) and other pusillanimous but brainy intelligentsia are a jest," as his publisher's blurbs continually inform us.

<sup>44</sup> September 19th, 1932. The evidence collected by the delegation to which Ellen Wilkinson referred was published later in their report, *Condition of India*. (London, 1933.)

<sup>45</sup> *Daily Mail*, September 21st, 1932.

<sup>46</sup> *Morning Post*, September 16th, 1932. This subject is dealt with further in Chapter XV.

<sup>47</sup> *Daily Mail*, September 20th—the day the fast commenced.

<sup>48</sup> This result was announced in the *Daily Express* of September 26th, under the caption "Gandhi Climbs Down."

<sup>49</sup> *Observer*, September 25th, 1932. The proposed percentage was, of course, still inadequate, but it was only a minimum; and in joint electorates the Depressed Classes will be a political force in proportion to their voting strength.

<sup>50</sup> Mr. Brailsford in *Reynolds' Illustrated Weekly* (August 28th, 1933), explained the action of the Government as being due to the fear of Gandhi's "ghost." Dead he could have been more trouble than he was alive.

<sup>51</sup> It is doubtful whether the name of Dr. Ambedkar is so much as known to the vast majority of the "Untouchables"; and it would be extremely surprising if more than a thousand out of their 40 to 60 millions ever became Christians at his suggestion. The proposal was promptly repudiated by Mr. M. C. Rajah, who published some illuminating correspondence with Ambedkar in the Indian press.

## CHAPTER XI

### TOWARDS SOCIAL REVOLT

WE have already observed that the deepening of the conflict between the people of India and their rulers has been accompanied by the steady growth of an alliance between the Government and certain class interests in India. In considering briefly the nature of these interests we shall next observe how they operate and by what means the Government has identified them, or is endeavouring to identify them, with British Rule. It is this process which is gradually converting a national struggle into a conflict of social classes.

Indian bondholders who had subscribed to the East India Company's loans were among the first to acquire a vested interest in the Government. To these were added a gradually increasing body of Indian Government officials. Without doubt, however, the Indian princes contributed the first major acquisition, and they deserve more than the superficial study which will be possible within the scope of this book.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian States, autocratically ruled by Indian princes, number to-day about 600, and have a population of over 80,000,000 inhabitants. They vary considerably in size, and represent for the most part either territories of princes who were allies of the East Indian Company and succeeded in surviving its embrace, or territories having little commercial value or natural prosperity to recommend them.

How these princes rule is little realised in this country, and less so in the present age than in the past. Lord Curzon tells us of a prince who shot his servant in a fit of temper, of another who connived at the poisoning of his uncle, and of a third who "for nearly twenty years had been guilty of gross maladministration, of shocking barbarity in the

treatment of his subjects.”<sup>2</sup> On the general conduct and administration of the princes Sir Alfred Lyall made the remark that:

“the protected autocrat in a Native State has not as yet turned out such a success that the English nation can be proud of having brought him out upon the political stage.”<sup>3</sup>

The present policy of the British Government towards the princes dates in effect from the revolt of 1857, which proved the necessity of reliable Indian allies if India was to be indefinitely and securely held by her British rulers. The era of conquest ended, and the era of consolidation began with the assumption of control by the Crown. The princes were no longer strong enough to prove a serious menace: it was from the people themselves, under a new leadership, that the next challenge was to come. But the princes were still strong enough to be useful allies if they could be given security in their possessions, and it was to this end that British policy turned itself in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> As Lord Roberts said:

“It was the Mutiny which brought Lord Canning into closer communication with the Princes of India and paved the way for Lord Lytton’s brilliant conception of the Imperial Assemblage—a great political success which laid the foundation of that feeling of confidence which now, happily, exists between the Ruling Chiefs and the Queen Empress.”<sup>5</sup>

The political relationship which binds the Indian princes to the “Paramount Power” (the British Crown) is commonly held to imply three principles which may be summarized as follows: There is firstly the “loyalty” principle, whereby the prince is bound to support the Paramount Power and acknowledge its supremacy. Secondly there is the principle that the Paramount Power should protect the prince in case of rebellion; and thirdly there is the principle that the Paramount Power should protect the people of the State from oppression by the Prince.<sup>6</sup>

That the first principle is well implemented was evident in the Great War and again at the Round Table Conference.

Indeed, on March 1st, 1930 (the very day before Gandhi sent his final letter to the Viceroy before commencing Civil Disobedience) the Chamber of Princes passed a resolution placing on record its emphatic disapproval of the policy of separation from the British Empire.<sup>7</sup> It is, in fact, a commonly accepted view in India, that this is the only possible policy for the princes to pursue if they are to survive at all. Without British protection for these mediaeval survivals it is generally assumed that the people of the Indian States would revolt and destroy them.<sup>8</sup>

This consideration brings us to the second principle and explains why the Paramount Power is zealous in its discharge of its duty to protect the princes. This is due not to a perverse desire to foster an anachronism for antiquarian reasons, but because those who only remain in power by virtue of British support are bound to be themselves the most loyal of allies. Hence the Indian State has become, to quote G. W. Steevens, "in its way, a paradise," from the point of view of the Raja.

"In the old days if he shut himself up with opium and nautch-girls, a neighbour would come and take his country . . . his subjects might rise against misgovernment; if they did it now British troops would come in to uphold him. A few years ago the Thakurs of Bikanir . . . did actually set about to depose their king for incompetence and exaction . . . but the Sirkar sent a column to put the Maharajah back again."<sup>9</sup>

The product of this protection, plus an English education, is a kind of Public School Raja, the delight of the society gossip-pedlar.<sup>10</sup> The English girl of the middle classes, who would call his poorer countrymen "niggers," and nourishes an almost religious horror of social contact with them, finds race prejudice no barrier when confronted by the Public School Raja. Indeed, she is even proud to be seen dancing with him. At the end of the last century Mr. G. W. Steevens was already gloating over this transformation, and pointed with satisfaction to the proficiency of the princes at polo, to the success of the Maharajah of Patiala as a cricketer, and of the Nizam of Hyderabad

as "the best shot in the world."<sup>11</sup> The name of "Ranji" will recall even more to most English readers, whilst the present ruler of Kashmir, better known in this country as "Mr. A," also has his diversions.

Naturally, as Steevens pointed out, "it is hard to get him (the Indian prince) to take the least interest in the affairs of his subjects."

"After all, why should he? If a second Akbar were born in India we should not let him rule in his own way."<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, as recent examples show, the raja knows that sufficient is our arm alone and his defence is sure.

It is, therefore, not remarkable that the Maharaja of Patiala should have declared at the Round Table Conference that "The maintenance of the British connection is the fundamental assumption of our whole position."<sup>13</sup> This prince had concrete reasons for such an assumption, as the reader will find in the appendix to this book. He had, moreover, already imprisoned 112 citizens of his own State for celebrating "Independence Day" and offered his resources to the Viceroy to assist in crushing Civil Disobedience in British India.

Kashmir affords us another example of the ties that bind the princes to the British Crown. Here, as it happens, the people are mainly Moslems, while the prince is a Hindu—a fact which enables the British authorities to represent every rising against the Maharaja as a problem of Hindus versus Moslems.<sup>14</sup> Thus in 1931, when Moslem Nationalists entered Kashmir and demonstrated against the Maharaja, British troops were immediately sent to help the prince suppress what was termed a "communal" disturbance.<sup>15</sup> A special ordinance was promulgated by the Viceroy authorising magistrates in the Punjab to declare five or more persons an illegal assembly if they met for the purpose of going to Kashmir to cause interference in the administration.<sup>16</sup>

These Kashmir "disturbances" continued through the early months of 1932. Their real character was revealed when the Special Representative of the *Daily Telegraph*

reported on "this paradoxical position: a 'communal rebellion' in which not a single Hindu has been killed."<sup>17</sup> Soon after this an official report was issued on the riots of the previous September. This report was the work of a member of the I.C.S., who concluded that "the agitation was directed against the State," and that "it was not communal in the sense of being directed against any other community."<sup>18</sup> With the help of the Viceroy the Maharaja succeeded, however, in crushing his subjects.

How far the British Government fulfils its obligations to protect the people of the Indian States may be best realised by a study of recent events in Patiala.<sup>19</sup> For the rest it is clear that the methods of the British Government are too closely akin to those of the princes to make intervention a practical matter, even if there were the will for it.<sup>20</sup>

Occasionally, however, the Government interferes. The cases are carefully selected and coincide curiously with insubordination on the part of the prince or a default in his financial obligations. As an example we have the case of Alwar, a prince who was prominently before the public eye in 1933. In May of that year the papers announced that the Maharaja of Alwar was about "to go abroad for a year or two years' holiday," a news item which was coupled with the statement that this "holiday" was the result of an ultimatum from the Government of India.<sup>21</sup>

Behind this announcement lay a long story of misrule and extortion, which had led the peasants of Alwar State to rebel and forced the Maharaja to call for British assistance in suppressing them.<sup>22</sup> The real crime of the Maharaja, however, was his financial embarrassment; for all his extortions had failed to keep pace with his extravagance. The Government of India had therefore intervened in the interests of his creditors.

By the time the prince arrived in London the papers spoke openly of his "banishment."<sup>23</sup> He appeared once more in the news when the front page of the *Sunday Dispatch* told of a tragedy in his "luxurious West End suite," where one of his servants was found with his throat cut by a razor. The man was still alive but could not speak

"and the razor might have betrayed the hand that wielded it. But in the confusion that followed the finding of the dying man, somebody picked it up and washed it clean."<sup>24</sup>

Two days later, however, an unnecessarily obscure paragraph announced the verdict of the Coroner's jury as suicide whilst of unsound mind;<sup>25</sup> and the Maharaja lost his last chance of front-page publicity.

The extravagance of the princes is tolerably well-known. The personal budget of the Maharaja of Mysore is about one-fourteenth of the total revenues of his State, and he spent the same amount (roughly £180,000) on entertaining Edward VIIIth when he visited India as Prince of Wales. In 1929 Bikanir spent 3.6 per cent of its total budget on works of public utility (including education) as against 22.6 per cent on the Maharaja's personal expenses.<sup>26</sup> Patiala entertained fifty millionaires at the wedding of his heir and it was recorded that

"Millions of pounds have been spent on the rejoicings, though the normal annual revenue of Patiala State is only £844,000, and the Maharaja's 1,500,000 subjects would have to toil for years to pay the costs of these weeks of splendour."<sup>27</sup>

The Maharaja of Jamnagar is credited with the record, being reputed to spend 50 per cent of his State revenues upon his personal requirements. Nor did the popular "Ranji," Jam Sahib of Nawānagar, give his Indian subjects any reason to join in the lament of the cricketing world at his death in 1933. One English paper remarked upon the fact that he had been "a wonderful host to his English friends."<sup>28</sup> He had indeed. His expenditure on their entertainment was phenomenal: £50,000 on Lord Sydenham; £80,000 on Lord Willingdon; on Lord Lloyd (then Sir George Lloyd) £115,000, and the same for Lord Reading. He reached his limit with £200,000 on the entertainment of the Good Viceroy, Lord Irwin.<sup>29</sup> In "Ranji's" dominions there was no liberty of speech, no freedom for the Press, no liberty of person or security of property, and no



representative institution. There was every form of tyranny, including forced labour.

These Indian princes have their own private armies, which are at the disposal of the British Government in times of war or civil revolt. They also contribute annual grants for the special reserves of the Regular Army "so that if Great Britain ever needs to call up the military resources of India she will have plenty from which to choose one of the finest irregular armies the world has known."<sup>30</sup>

The princes have their own organisation, known as the Chamber of Princes, through which they co-ordinate their common interests and exert pressure when necessary on the British Government. The Chamber consists of 109 princes plus twelve elected as representatives by 127 smaller States. Patiala was for some years, till his resignation in May, 1936, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes and the principal spokesman of its reactionary opinions. Its attitude to the new Constitution has been rather uncertain because, although the princes are to be given an extremely powerful position in the Federal Government,<sup>31</sup> they fear that any Indian Government over which they do not exert a majority control may be less lax than the Viceroy in its supervision.

From the standpoint of the British Government it is, however, essential to rope the princes into the new scheme. As Lord Willingdon told the Chamber of Princes when defending the Government White paper:

"It appears to me to offer you great advantages, and if you choose to exercise them you will have weight and influence in the Federal bodies *which will go far to ensure stability and ordered progress in India.*"<sup>32</sup>

On this pronouncement the *Daily Telegraph* commented editorially that "the proposed allocation of seats to Princes' nominees and to other consistently loyal and moderate elements is such as to put the appearance of mischievous or disaffected majorities out of question." For, said the *Telegraph* leader:

"The fact is that, even in those provinces where a Congress party majority in the councils is a possibility,

the special powers reserved to the Governor provide fully against any misuse of that situation; while in other provinces the Congress party is destined to be a permanent minority. As for the Central Legislature, the membership of it is intentionally devised, and most properly so, to give a decisive weight to the more responsible elements of Indian opinion."<sup>33</sup>

Professor Rushbrook Williams, probably the most astute of all the Government's political agents and propagandists, has summed up the whole position with class-conscious clarity. Speaking as one who "knows the trend of mind in the Native States, such as Patiala, where I serve," Professor Williams explained in 1930 that:

"The rulers of the Native States are very loyal to their British connection. Many of them owe their very existence to British justice and arms. Many of them would not be in existence to-day had not British power supported them during the struggles of the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. The Princes have a deep affection for King George and a great liking for the Prince of Wales, whom they have met in their own lands. Their affection and loyalty are important assets for Britain in the present troubles and in the readjustment which must come.

"On the whole, in my opinion, the Native States, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, would side with His Majesty's Government in preventing the destruction of British authority and the dissolution of the Indian Empire. If it came to a display of force, the military power of the Princes, representing a very considerable, well-armed force of highly-trained and experienced fighting men, would be on the side of order—the British side.

"The situations of these feudatory States, checkerboarding all India as they do, are a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful, loyal Native States."<sup>34</sup>

A study of the position of the princes makes it clear that nationalism alone can never free India from foreign domination. Consequently those internal struggles which have so often developed more slowly under imperialist rule<sup>35</sup> are in modern India integrated with the fight for national independence. In the case of the princes this integration can be simply expressed in the formula that there can be no independence for India while the princes remain, and no freedom from the princes while the British remain. An American writer has described the purpose of the Indian States as "camouflaged Ulsters."<sup>36</sup>

For several reasons the revolt against the princes has developed more slowly than the Nationalist Movement in British India, notwithstanding such examples as those already cited in Kashmir and Alwar. There is, to begin with, the depressing certainty that, so long as the British remain, no local struggle against an oppressive raja can succeed in overthrowing him, owing to the boundless resources of the Paramount Power. Secondly there is the relative backwardness of these States in their industrial development. This is due partly to the fact that the British in their conquests occupied all the most fertile parts of the country and those possessed of the greatest natural wealth. On the other hand these mediaeval monarchies, artificially preserved, are themselves the greatest obstacles to industrial progress. The third cause that retards the development of a revolutionary movement in the States is the illusion, carefully fostered among the people, that they "already enjoy Home Rule."<sup>37</sup> As in every other country, an oppressor in India can generally count on a little extra indulgence if he is not a "foreigner" and wears the same colour of skin as his victims.

In spite of these initial disadvantages, a movement has nevertheless grown up against the tyranny of India's feudal despots. This movement has its main organisational expression in the All India States Peoples' Conference, which has done valuable work in exposing the rule of the princes. At considerable risk to its leaders and adherents this organisation undertakes the publication of journals and

other literature and was responsible for publishing the *Indictment of Patiala*.<sup>38</sup>

Such organised expressions of opinion are, of course, consistently ignored in all considerations of constitutional changes, when the princes are assumed to speak for their people. Thus, in 1927, an Official Committee was set up to enquire into the political position of the Indian States, but it refused to receive a deputation from the peoples of those States; and the Simon Commission accepted in its report the principle upon which this refusal was based. It is interesting to note that the Chairman of the All India States Peoples' Conference described the conclusions of the Simon Report with regard to the Indian States as "one-sided, defective, thoroughly reactionary and utterly unacceptable." In a speech that was otherwise cautious to the point of unnecessary moderation, the Chairman later referred plainly to the fact that only the British Government prevented the subjects of the princes from "resorting to their birthright of rebellion and revolution," and in his final words he advocated that the method of non-co-operation should be extended from British India to the Indian States.<sup>39</sup> That step has not yet been taken; but the two rebellions to which reference has already been made are indications of a widespread spirit of revolt.

The occasion of the Round Table Conference (when the people were once more denied representation, which was accorded only to their rulers) was utilised for a manifesto "To the Nations of the World." It is indeed regrettable that this manifesto was given hardly any publicity in this country;<sup>40</sup> so that while the voice of nationalism in British India and even of Indian socialism was dimly heard, the 80,000,000 people of the States could find no vehicle for their protest.

In this campaign against the misrule of the princes the States' peoples have consistently refused to be drawn into the feuds between rival despots<sup>41</sup>. *The Young Rajasthan*, produced against the greatest difficulties as a weekly paper, exposed the abominations of forced labour, and drew particular attention to its use in connection with Viceregal visits to the States.<sup>42</sup> The editor of the *Riyasat*, a vernacular

weekly of Delhi, was prosecuted in 1929 under the Princes Protection Act for his vigorous attacks upon oppression in the States; nor has his been the only case of this kind in recent years. Both these papers have reported numerous political trials in the various States, indicating that activity against the princes has been continuous. Among the more recent political trials Bikanir produced in 1932 a "miniature Meerut trial" which was remarkable for a savageness worthy of its prototype.<sup>43</sup>

After the princes the Indian landlords constitute the most formidable curse of the present social structure. "The landlord is too often a parasite, living on his tenants, wasting his substance and corrupting his neighbourhood":<sup>44</sup> such is the verdict of an Englishman of orthodox opinions. The political views of the landlord class have for some time past been expressed at landowners' conferences, where they had vied with the Indian princes in their resolutions of devoted adherence to the British Empire. The Indian landlord of to-day is in conflict not only with the growing socialist movement, but with the middle-class nationalists, because he sees no adequate prop for his interests once British rule is ended.<sup>45</sup>

The clear alignment of this feudal element on the side of the British, who created it as a buttress against popular revolt,<sup>46</sup> is the most important of all the various factors which are transforming the national struggle for independence into a class conflict, and pointing to a socialist solution. By an inevitable process the Nationalist Movement, drawing its fighting strength mainly from the peasantry, is forced up against the problem of Indian landlordism, and can neither achieve its own objective nor retain its hold over the peasants unless it is prepared to challenge these vested interests.<sup>47</sup> In this situation, as we shall observe, the socialist wing of the Congress has in recent years made vast strides in its internal struggle to capture the Congress machinery, whilst the tactics of the Right-wing leaders have discredited them throughout the *zamindari* provinces.

Since the beginning of 1936 there has been a remarkable development of organised peasant activity directed mainly against the landowners. Falling prices have reduced

the villagers to the most complete destitution, so that the payment of rent has in many parts of the country become an impossibility. Whilst the Government has made remissions in its revenue demands upon the landlords there has been, in most cases, no corresponding remission made by the landlords in their demands for rent; with the result that organised strike-action has been taken by the tenant-farmers, particularly in rice-growing districts.

Early in 1936 cultivators of sugar-cane at Bhita in Bihar refused to supply cane to the sugar mills on the grounds that they were not given fair prices and were cheated in weighments. Some of these peasants were promptly arrested without warrant by the police and detained with no charge, at the request of the mill-owners. Peasant demonstrations in Andhra occurred at the same time, and there was agitation in the Indian States of Jaipur and Bhavnagar.

The attitude of the Government, both in the arrest of strikers and the externment of socialist workers from centres of agitation, precipitated the formation of a national peasant organisation under the title of the *All India Kisan Committee*.<sup>48</sup> Enquiry Committees were also set up by the Congress throughout the country, and investigations (which varied in thoroughness according to the political composition of the provincial Congress membership) were carried out in June, 1936. The Congress Socialist Party, which had been formed within the Congress to accelerate its movement to the left, found in this new peasant activity its first major opportunity. The Socialist leaders were able to demonstrate that:

“Those who want to develop an anti-imperialist consciousness among the masses, must make up their minds about the native system of exploitation—the junior imperialism. They will fail in their purpose, as they have done so far, if they advocate the retention of the latter and elimination of the former. An anti-imperialist programme for the masses must be based on the elimination of all exploiters.”<sup>49</sup>

This view, whilst it repelled many of the Congress nationalists and exposed their position, forced the attention of

a powerful section. Among their successes the socialists were able to announce in their weekly organ that the Enquiry Committee appointed by the Bihar Congress Committee had been greeted everywhere by thousands of peasants

“and recorded, after thorough cross-examination, the evidence of more than 2,000 witnesses. The revelations about the reported sale of sisters and daughters to pay the landlords’ rents have shocked the public and awakened it to the horrors of agrarian life in Bihar.”<sup>50</sup>

Simultaneously the Congress Socialist Party was building up the peasant organisations and bridging the gulf which had hitherto separated the socialist intellectuals from the peasantry. Throughout India in June, 1936, there were held under socialist leadership conferences at which thousands of villagers were able for the first time to formulate programmes containing their own immediate demands. The grievances of the villagers as expressed by themselves included oppressive taxation of land, rack-renting, indebtedness, unemployment (among the landless labourers), forced labour, maladministration of irrigation, and the taxation of wells.

By September, 1936, a mass movement had come into being which neither the Government nor the Congress could ignore. The *Congress Socialist*<sup>51</sup> records the shooting of peasants heading demonstrations in Bengal and the use of special legislation passed for the “Suppression of Terrorist Outrages” in order to crush the peasant movement. The following month the same paper<sup>52</sup> tells how in the Central Provinces three thousand peasants surrounded the car of an Indian Minister of the Provincial Government demanding food and work. Eight thousand cultivators reaping the cotton harvest in the Punjab struck at the same time against the terms imposed by their landlords. Conferences numbering as many as ten thousand and fifteen thousand peasants were recorded from different parts of the country, and eighty-six prosecutions of workers organising the peasants were reported from Bihpur in Bihar.

This new political activity among the peasants has not been confined to any single aspect of their numerous

grievances, but is significant chiefly for its clarification of the most urgent class issue in India—that of the tenant versus the landlord. By implication it has also clarified the wider conflict between the debtor and creditor classes, since the functions of money-lender and landlord are commonly united in the same person. The tendency for years past in Indian village life has been that either the tenant falls into arrears with his rent and so into debt with the owner of his land, or, alternatively, that the peasant proprietor falls into arrears with his taxes, borrows from a usurer, and so becomes a “debt-slave” of his creditor, who has first claim on all he produces.<sup>53</sup>

It may be mentioned here that the inevitable competition between the claims of the Government revenue and those of the money-lender has led the Provincial Governments to facilitate co-operative banking since 1906. The supervision of co-operative societies was one of the subjects “transferred” under the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and has since developed slowly among the Cinderella Departments entrusted to the limited powers and resources of the Indian legislatures. Such, however, is the destitution and economic uncertainty of the Indian villager’s condition that he generally prefers to borrow at usurious rates with an undated termination to his loan rather than to avail himself of the more moderate but more rigid terms of co-operative credit.<sup>54</sup>

While the peasant is at last at grips with the three-headed monster of rent, revenue and interest, the industrial worker can show a longer history of struggle in which we can recognise the emergence of a new revolutionary force. We have already noted the growth of an Indian industrial system, bringing with it new social classes, numerically small in relation to the whole population, but influential in their effect upon political development. We have now to consider the more recent history of Indian industrialism.

Less than 10 per cent of the Indian population is supported by industries, as against sixty-seven which is directly dependent upon agriculture. Organisation among the industrial workers dates from 1884, when a conference of Bombay workers set forth their grievances in a memorial



carrying 5,500 signatures.<sup>55</sup> In the years that followed organisation developed under a reformist leadership, and the Bombay Mill Hands' Association was created in the 'nineties. This association could not be termed a trade union, having "no roll of membership, no funds and no rules";<sup>56</sup> but by 1894 the workers of Bombay had advanced sufficiently to carry out two small strikes, and in the following year a strike of 8,000 mill operatives is recorded at Ahmedabad.<sup>57</sup>

Further strikes took place at Bombay in 1897 and in the Government Press at Madras in 1903, the latter being broken by convicts from the penitentiary. A strike in the Government Press at Calcutta in 1905 led to gains for the operatives, but their leaders were victimised. Throughout this period organisation functioned mainly on an *ad hoc* basis and operated against great difficulties. The mill-owners imported outside labour to break strikes "but the newcomers usually joined the rank and file shortly after their arrival."<sup>58</sup> The employers then sought to increase their control over the workers by housing them in quarters owned by themselves. But one fact operated in favour of the working-class, namely the shortage of labour in the early days when the mills were growing rapidly and poverty had not yet compelled so many peasants to seek work in the towns.

In 1907 workers at the Samastipur Railway workshop in Bengal struck for better wages and obtained some small concessions. In Bombay, where there had been strikes in 1907 and 1910, a new association was formed to obtain a reduction of the working hours to twelve per day and to demand workmen's compensation. It was not, however, till after the outbreak of War in 1914 that any considerable advance was made organisationally.

The War created a shortage of products usually imported from abroad and an increase in the demand for Indian goods. In this situation the Indian workers were in a favourable position to demand the increase in wages which the general rise in prices made necessary. After a series of strikes in 1917 there was a general increase of 10 per cent to 30 per cent in wages. Further strikes followed in 1918, when the Madras Labour Union was formed. The Whitley

Report records that strikes were even more numerous during the winter of 1919-20, and that in the winter which followed "industrial strikes became almost general in organised industry."<sup>59</sup>

The first political strike occurred in 1919, when workers in almost every industry responded to a call for a General Strike against the Rowlatt Acts. By this time there were four Trade Unions in Madras, with a membership of 20,000 persons. Similar unions were now founded in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, and other industrial centres. In December of 1919 the workers of seventy-two Bombay factories sent their representatives to a conference, at which a memorandum was drawn up, demanding a reduction of hours and increase of wages, the refusal of these demands being followed by a series of strikes in the cotton mills.

In 1920 the All-India Trade Union Congress was formed, and held its first meeting at Bombay. Sixty unions affiliated and an era of intense conflict began, mainly on the issue of working hours. This resulted in a Factory Act, securing a 60-hour week for some of the workers with a maximum working-day of eleven hours, or six hours in the case of children.<sup>60</sup>

Working-class agitation combined with the force of foreign competition, as exercised through the I.L.O., to compel such industrial legislation. Thus an Indian Mines Act of 1923 limited hours to sixty for workers above ground and fifty-four for underground workers, whilst the employment of children under the age of thirteen in mines was prohibited. At the Washington Labour Conference, when India had been asked to raise the age of admission to twelve for children in all factories, mines and railways, the Indian Government had felt that this was going too far. The proposal, sponsored by Mr. N. M. Joshi (an Indian reformist leader) and other workers' delegates, obtained ninety-one votes to three, the three dissentients being the delegates of the Indian Government and the Indian employers.<sup>61</sup> The double pressure to which we have referred was nevertheless strong enough to force the passing of the 1922 Factories Act, already mentioned.

In spite of such legislation Indian industrial conditions and the legal protection of workers remained deplorable

by every comparison with European standards. A League of Nations Union brochure (published in 1928) quotes evidence that in the Bengal coalfields "a woman may have to carry a basket containing a load of sixty to eighty pounds a considerable distance (200 yards) and up a steep incline."<sup>62</sup> With regard to the employment of women in mines it is interesting to note that power to prohibit the employment of women underground was given in an Act of 1901 but not exercised till 1929, when women were excluded from underground workings "except in exempted mines."<sup>63</sup>

According to the Whitley Report the mines "exempted" included all but 3,000 women employed underground in 1928; so that over 25,000 women were permitted to continue this work for the time being. In these "exempted" mines the percentage of women employed underground was to be reduced by 3 per cent or 4 per cent annually. The Whitley Report noted that in spite of these regulations the Government salt mines in the Punjab were employing fresh women workers.<sup>64</sup> These women were employed in "carrying salt in baskets for a considerable distance up and down steep inclines" and the Whitley Commission was "struck by the poor health of the miners and their families."<sup>65</sup>

The employment of women for such purposes and of children in the Indian factories is not only indefensible in itself, but is among the causes of the low wage standard in Indian industries. We shall revert later to this subject with particular reference to its effect on the standard of living in other countries.<sup>66</sup> The Whitley Report revealed that only a minority of the workers were protected by such legislation as existed, since the great majority of workers were employed in unregulated establishments.

The appointment of the Whitley Commission proved in itself the occasion of a setback in the development of working-class organisation. The Trade Union Congress had already lost prestige with the workers on account of its failure to support the textile strike of 1924, when over 160,000 mill operatives, throwing up their own organisation, had come out against the withdrawal of an annual bonus by the millowners.<sup>67</sup> In 1929 the Trade Union Congress, having moved to the left under a more militant leadership,

was split by the disputed question of co-operation with the Royal Commission. By a majority vote it was decided to boycott the Commission; but the right-wing elements broke away on this issue and formed the Indian Trades Union Federation.

In Bombay the big strike of 1924 had led to the emergence of a new revolutionary leadership which failed, however, to stabilise either its own position with the Bombay mill-workers or the organisation which it created. A prolonged strike in 1928, lasting over six months, had been conducted by the newly-formed *Girni Kamgar*, or Red Flag Union.<sup>68</sup> This strike had ended with the promise of an enquiry by a committee which had been appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Fawcett. The arrest of the militant leaders of the Bombay workers and their trial at Meerut with other working-class leaders has already been noted among the political events of this period. This arrest of leaders three days before the report of the Fawcett Committee had been timed to anticipate the Committee's findings, which were entirely in favour of the millowners. The strike of 1929, which had followed this report and lasted almost as long as the 1928 strike, left the Bombay workers exhausted and resourceless at the very moment when the split in the Trade Union Congress weakened the position of the working-class throughout India.<sup>69</sup>

Such was the position of the working-class in India on the eve of the great national struggle of 1930, and it largely accounts for the absence of any effective working-class policy during that period. The mass movements of 1924 and 1928-9 proved to have no organisational stability, a fact due largely to the extreme poverty of the workers, but quite as much to their reaction against an ultra-left leadership.<sup>70</sup> Working-class activity received a further setback in 1929 with the passing of the Trades Disputes Act, making illegal all political strikes, sympathy strikes or strikes "in breach of contract" carried out by employees of a public utility service.

In spite of the temporary lull in the industrial field which followed the events of 1929, there has been a revival of activity since 1934, when the cotton operatives again

came out in a big strike involving 70,000 men.<sup>71</sup> On this occasion the Government promptly arrested one of the Trade Union leaders (Mr. B. T. Ranadive) who was allowed bail only on condition that he would not participate in the conduct of the strike. This was followed by the arrest (at the end of April and the beginning of May, 1934) of twenty-four other leaders, including four who had been accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The arrests were executed under the Bombay Special Emergency Powers Act on the pretext that those arrested were Communists who had fomented the strike for political purposes against the "general inclination" of 70,000 mill operatives.<sup>72</sup>

The occasion of the 1934 strike was the attempt of the Bombay millowners to make further reductions in the wages of the workers, which averaged roughly 2s. 3d. per day in the case of men and 1s. 1d. for women.<sup>73</sup> In addition to arresting the leaders of the workers, the police broke up demonstrations by *lathi* charges on the strikers, attacking them even when they "resorted to passive resistance and squatted in front of some of the mills."<sup>74</sup> A few days later the police fired on working-class "rioters" and killed one person, wounding four.<sup>75</sup> The London *Observer* reported as early as April 29th (in the first days of the strike) that "the total casualties are more than a hundred mill hands injured, and three are suffering from revolver shot wounds, while, of the police, a dozen officers and fifty constables were struck with stones and other missiles." The same report stated that "hunger and destitution may drive the men to greater violence."

Tactics similar to those used in 1934 have been adopted by the Government on subsequent occasions. Thus in May, 1936, when a strike broke out in the cotton mills of Lucknow, the Government of the United Provinces promulgated an order under Section 144 (Criminal Procedure) prohibiting an assembly of more than five persons near the mills, whilst notices were served on the office-bearers of the Lucknow Textile Workers' Union not to come within a half-mile radius of these mills.<sup>76</sup>

The general position of working-class movements in India at the end of 1936 may be described as definitely

healthier than it has ever been before. Unity has been re-established between the rival trade union organisations, and the Congress Socialist Party, under the able leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, has simultaneously permeated both the industrial organisations and the nationalist movement. It has also, as we have observed, championed and led the peasants in their struggles against the landlords and the Government and identified itself with the people of the Indian States against their rulers.

The Trade Union Congress, at its last annual conference, adopted a resolution declaring that the "minimum demands of the working-class cannot be secured without the attainment of independence" and decided to enter into close co-operation with the Indian National Congress on the grounds that "it is to-day the best available means of effecting a united front of the Indian people against Imperialism and its native allies." Specific co-operation in this field was urged with regard to such questions as the new Constitution, civil liberties and war, whilst at the same time the T.U.C. pressed the National Congress to accept its scheme for the collective representation of working-class organisations.<sup>77</sup>

On the three issues specified the T.U.C. and the National Congress have a close practical convergence of policy, each being pledged to fight the Constitution from within by contesting all elections, refusing ministerial offices and wrecking the Constitution by obstruction. On the War issue each organisation is pledged to oppose any imperialist war and to continue its struggle against the Government.

These questions of policy with regard to the Constitution, imperialist war, and class collaboration against the Government will be further discussed in the final chapter of this book, where the Socialist strategy will be briefly examined. Before dealing with the task of the revolutionary forces it is necessary, however, to examine the most formidable of all the obstacles to unity, whether working-class or national in character. Our next chapter is therefore concerned with the Hindu-Moslem problem, and this will be followed by a brief examination of the means by which ignorance and prejudice are fostered in this country and

in India in order to create and maintain racial barriers between the masses in the two countries.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The "loyalty" of the princes is itself partly due to the Government policy of forcing them to invest their hordes in Government securities. (See Blunt's *Diaries*, pp. 678, 682.) Where their treasure was their hearts naturally migrated.

<sup>2</sup> *Leaves from a Viceroy's Notebook*, by Lord Curzon, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> *Asiatic Studies*, by Sir Alfred Lyall, p. 225. There are, of course, better governed States, which have already been mentioned in connection with such matters as education. These exceptions help to prove what is possible throughout India, but they are not typical of the rule of the Princes.

<sup>4</sup> During the revolt itself the majority of the princes had taken the side of the British. According to Major Evans Bell they proved "breakwaters to the storm which would otherwise have swept over us in one great wave." (*Last Counsels of an Unknown Counsellor*. London, 1883.)

<sup>5</sup> *Forty-one Years in India*, by Lord Roberts (Preface.)

<sup>6</sup> These principles were clearly elucidated by the Butler Committee and are held to apply universally, whether explicitly expressed in treaty form or otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> The loyalty of the princes has, of course, been further fostered by the policy of superintending the education of minors. (See *In India* by G. W. Steevens. London, 1899, p. 264.)

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *India: Peace or War*, by C. S. Ranga Iyer, (London, 1930). p. 163. The author is very moderate in his political views, but clearly takes this point for granted.

<sup>9</sup> *In India* by G. W. Steevens. pp. 262-3.

<sup>10</sup> Mr. G. T. Garratt in *An Indian Commentary* calls the colleges where the young Princes are trained "institutions which faithfully reproduce the worse features of the English Public Schools."

<sup>11</sup> *In India*, by G. W. Steevens, pp. 264-5. The evolution of the Public School Raja has completely falsified Mr. Aldous Huxley's dictum that "superiority in India is a question of epidermis." A good bank balance and the correct school tie will even atone for a brown skin, though a white skin needs neither.

<sup>12</sup> *In India*, p. 265.

<sup>13</sup> *News Chronicle*, Nov. 30th, 1930.

<sup>14</sup> This type of misrepresentation will be dealt with further in Chapter XII.

<sup>15</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* of November 11th, 1931, makes it clear that the "trouble" was started by Moslem "Red Shirts," that is to say by a Nationalist organisation affiliated to the Congress. In spite of this admission the *Guardian* described the disturbances as "communal."

<sup>16</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, Nov. 11th, 1931.

<sup>17</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 8th, 1932. This paper on the same day reported an attack on "police and revenue officials" at the capital city of Kashmir by "a crowd of 4,000, fired by seditious speeches."

<sup>15</sup> Middleton's Report as summarised in the *Associated Press* cables from Jammu (Feb. 17th, 1932). *The Times* (Feb. 28th, 1932) went so far as to admit that "even Hindu opinion seems impressed with the need for an immediate clean-up in Kashmir." The word "even" is entirely unnecessary.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix. P. L. Chudgar's book, *Indian Princes under British Protection* should be studied for further examples.

<sup>20</sup> In March, 1931, Bhopal State promulgated through a Gazette Extraordinary an ordinance on the lines of the Bengal Ordinances. The Viceroy was hardly in a position to criticise!

<sup>21</sup> *Evening Standard*, May 20th, 1933. Compare also the case of Nabha, mentioned in the appendix.

<sup>22</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 18th, 1933.

<sup>23</sup> *News Chronicle*, July 7th, 1933.

<sup>24</sup> *Sunday Dispatch*, Dec. 17th, 1933.

<sup>25</sup> *Morning Post*, Dec. 19th, 1933.

<sup>26</sup> Chudgar's *Indian Princes under British Protection* (1929). According to the *Literary Digest* (Dec. 3rd, 1927) Alwar spent over nine times as much on his motor cars as the amount spent in his State on education.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Herald*, March 14th, 1933. The Nizam of Hyderabad spent £38,000 on entertaining Lord Irwin, though this was nothing to the amount spent by "Ranji" for the same purpose.

Such figures as these do not always tell us the worst; for the sum of £11,000 spent in 1926-7 on the heir-apparent of Limbdi State was simply entered as part of the expenses of the Education Department.

<sup>28</sup> *Evening Standard*, April 3rd, 1933.

<sup>29</sup> These figures are given in rupees (with full details in the case of Lord Irwin) in *Indian Princes as their People See Them*, (Pamphlet No. 1), published at Bombay by the Indian States' Peoples' Conference. The State of Nawanagar has a tobacco monopoly, and an instance is cited where a whole village was fined for not buying this State tobacco, on the assumption that since the people were not buying from the State they were probably smuggling. The people were also forced to consume their quota of State-manufactured salt.

<sup>30</sup> Article on *India's Private Armies*, by P. J. Clancy, who also mentions that "like many other loyal landlords in India, Sir Umar Hayat Khan, K.C.I.E., of the Punjab, keeps special reserves of troops at his own expense to aid the Government in emergency." (*Edinburgh Evening News*, Jan. 1st, 1932.)

<sup>31</sup> In the new Federal Assembly the princes will have 105 representatives out of a total of 355. In the Upper House (the Council of State) they will have 104 representatives out of a total of 260. With the landed, commercial and European interests (all represented out of proportion to their numbers) the princes will combine to form a permanent majority of reactionaries in both Houses.

<sup>32</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, March 21st, 1933 (Our italics). It should be remembered that an American Admiral defined stable government as "Government under which foreign capital can be safely invested."

<sup>33</sup> *Telegraph* leader, March 21st, 1933. The reference to "permanent minorities" of Congress opinion presumably refers to the property



qualification and the general manipulation of the electoral system to obtain "loyalist" majorities as far as possible. The "responsible elements" of the Central Legislature will be headed by the princes.

<sup>34</sup> *Evening Standard*, May 28th, 1930. Rushbrook Williams accompanied Patiala when the latter represented the Indian Princes at the League of Nations in 1925, and he is credited with having "organised" the princes in their more adroit political moves. In comment upon Rushbrook Williams' enthusiasm for the princes it is interesting to note that even the Government, in its 1921 Census Report, admitted the existence of slavery in their territories.

<sup>35</sup> E.g., in Ireland, where nationalism for many years obscured rather than clarified the conflict of classes.

<sup>36</sup> E. Holton James in *Unity* (Chicago), May 18th, 1931.

<sup>37</sup> Holton James, in the article cited above, quotes an example of this from Bangalore. The same illusion is often exploited in England, with the object of discrediting nationalism.

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix. This exposure of the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes laid its authors open to the heaviest sentences of imprisonment under the Princes' Protection Act. It also endangered the lives of all concerned, including the witnesses.

<sup>39</sup> Professor Abhyankar at the States Peoples' Conference, Bangalore Session, August 30th, 1930.

<sup>40</sup> The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (June 19th, 1931) did indeed publish an obscure paragraph, stating that "The Indian States Peoples' Conference, which has been sitting in Bombay, has passed a resolution repudiating the claims of the Princes to represent their subjects at the Round Table Conference, and urging that due provision be made for the representation of their views in their own right at the proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and the Round Table Conference, and to Mr. Gandhi in particular—in whom the Conference expresses full confidence—to safeguard the interests of the people of the Indian States."

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, the *Young Rajasthan* on the Patiala-Nabha dispute (October 24th, 1929).

<sup>42</sup> According to the *Young Rajasthan*, when a distinguished British official visits one of the States thousands of villagers are commonly pressed into service, without remuneration, to stand all night at intervals along the line where the special train of the distinguished official is to pass. They are all responsible with their lives for the safety of one foreigner.

<sup>43</sup> The accused in this instance were kept over three months without trial, and when legal proceedings began were made to walk over three miles in the scorching sun, heavily handcuffed.

<sup>44</sup> *Rusticus Loquitur*, p. 332, by M. L. Darling, I.C.S. Vera Anstey, in her *Economic Development of India*, calls the Zemindars "mere parasites who batten on the product of the cultivators."

<sup>45</sup> See *New Statesman and Nation*, April 23rd, 1932, p. 514.

<sup>46</sup> See *Rebel India*, pp. 132-3.

<sup>47</sup> Mr. Brailsford shows that in the Punjab the income from the land is divided between the landlord and the tenant in the ratio of 15c to 55. That is to say, the landlord has nearly threequarters of the

profits of agriculture as his rent. (See *Rebel India*, p. 49.) This was the normal ratio, before prices fell

<sup>48</sup> Similar peasant organisation had been fore-shadowed in 1922 in the United Provinces, but it did not spread further and died out in the years following the termination of Non-Co-operation. Rent strikes also took place in the United Provinces in 1930-32. Further reference to these strikes will be made in the final chapter.

<sup>49</sup> *Why Socialism?* by J. P. Narayan. Several copies of this book have been seized by the police, though it has not been formally banned by the Government as yet. Such seizures of literature are very common. (See *Leaves From the Jungle*, pp. 139, 141.)

<sup>50</sup> *The Congress Socialist*, June 27th, 1936.

<sup>51</sup> September 26th, 1936.

<sup>52</sup> October 10th, 1936.

<sup>53</sup> The Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India (p. 418) states that "the introduction of established law and permanent Civil Courts and the enactment of such measures as the Contract Act have strengthened the position of the moneylender." Vera Anstey, in her *Economic Development of India*, quotes a similar opinion from *Indian Co-operative Studies*, by B. A. Collins, who held that these institutions tended "to reduce the more important party to slavery or indigence." This is especially the case among the primitive tribes. The 1931 Census Report quotes the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner of Amraoti that "the ordinary law of contract operates harshly owing to the poverty, ignorance and honesty" of the people, who "are generally inclined to trust the money-lenders to be as honest as they are themselves." This statement, made with reference to the Korkus (an aboriginal tribe) is confirmed by Mr. Elwin with regard to the Gonds. (*Leaves from the Jungle*, p. 50.)

<sup>54</sup> In 1931 only 1.3 per cent of the Indian cultivators were members of Co-operative Banks.

<sup>55</sup> *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India*, by Ahmad Mukhtar. (London, 1935), p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> *Report on the working of the Factory Act*, Bombay, 1892.

<sup>57</sup> The facts regarding strikes, etc., up to 1914 are taken from Mr. Ahmad Mukhtar's book, cited above. The author is employed in the Bombay Educational Service, and his book carries a foreword by J. F. Glennings, C.B.E., Commissioner of Labour and Registrar of Trade Unions at Bombay.

<sup>58</sup> *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes*, p. 15. The creation of "yellow" unions was a later development of policy to the uses of which Mr. Brailsford refers in *Rebel India* (p. 87).

<sup>59</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931.

<sup>60</sup> This Act applied only to factories employing not less than twenty persons, with Government discretionary powers regarding smaller concerns. (See *India and the International Labour Organisation*, League of Nations Union Brochure, 1928.) Quotations from the Whitley Report given in Chapter XIV will show how effective legislation has proved.

<sup>61</sup> *India and the International Labour Organisation*, pp. 24-25. According to Mr. W. N. Ewer (*Daily Herald*, May 4th, 1934.) "Every convention proposed at the I.L.O. Conferences at Geneva has been opposed by

the Government of India." In the Indian Legislative Assembly the "representation" of Labour by a handful of Government nominees has always been a farce, and it will not be very different under the new constitution. The Government will in future decide which trade unions are to be represented (in the past "yellow" unions were created for this purpose) and where the members are illiterate the employers are to prepare the registers.

<sup>62</sup> *India and the International Labour Organisation*, p. 40.

<sup>63</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 127. The Report gives the number of women employed underground in 1928 as 28,408. The Report of the Chief Inspector for Mines for the year 1929 shows that girls of twelve, thirteen and fourteen were among the forty-seven women killed in Indian mines during that year.

<sup>64</sup> *Royal Commission Report*, p. 127.

<sup>65</sup> The same, p. 108.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter XIV.

<sup>67</sup> *Trade Unionism and Labour Disputes in India*, pp. 37-38. This authority states that "the operatives affected had scarcely any union. The strike was sufficiently prolonged and yet it was free from acts of violence"—a fact which did not prevent Government troops from firing on the peaceful demonstrations of the Bombay workers.

<sup>68</sup> According to Brailsford, writing in 1931 (*Rebel India*, p. 87) the *Girni Kamgar* had at the height of its power over 50,000 members and had by then sunk to some 500. Brailsford praises its vitality but considers it "strained the endurance of the men too far."

<sup>69</sup> The Meerut Trial will be further discussed in Chapter XV. The number on strike in Bombay on May 2nd, 1929, was officially announced to be 150,000 (*Hansard*, May 6th, 1929).

<sup>70</sup> Miss Beauchamp, in *British Imperialism in India* (p. 198), writing as a Communist, admits the mistake of that party "in allowing themselves to become isolated from the mass anti-imperialist movement" and shows how this mistake prevented the Communists from playing a leading part in the events of 1930.

<sup>71</sup> *The Observer*, April 29th, 1934.

<sup>72</sup> This is the reason given in the statement of the Bombay Government, published in *The Times* of April 30th in explanation of the first fourteen arrests. According to this statement the whole working-class of Bombay was apparently "intimidated" by "Communists."

<sup>73</sup> W. N. Ewer in the *Daily Herald* of May 4th, 1934, gives the even lower average figure of 14s. per week for men and 7s. for women. He describes the Bombay cotton operatives as "some of the lowest paid factory workers in the world."

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 25th, 1934.

<sup>75</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 28th, 1934.

<sup>76</sup> Prohibitory Order of May 22nd, 1936. *The Times* of January 6th, 1936, published a cable from its correspondent at Kuala Lumpur describing an even more ingenious method; 200 coolies who were on strike at a rubber estate were "induced to enter prison premises on the pretext of securing food and drink"; 100 were then arrested and nineteen leaders were deported.

<sup>77</sup> Fifteenth Session of the A.I.T.U.C., May 17th-18th, 1936.

## CHAPTER XII

### HINDUS AND MOSLEMS

THE name of Chittagong, in Bengal, has been periodically before the British public ever since the raid on the Chittagong Armoury by Indian Terrorists in April, 1930.

In July of the same year there began the trial (by a special tribunal sitting at Chittagong) of fifty-six persons accused in the Armoury Raid Case, including twenty-three "absconders" who were tried in their absence. Ever since the raid Chittagong appears to have been the scene of frequent skirmishes between the police and the revolutionary organisation that carried out the raid. Indians have been systematically disarmed and Europeans allowed to carry arms for protection.

The Armoury Raid Case ended with the conviction of all but sixteen of the accused. The sixteen who were acquitted were immediately re-arrested under the Bengal Ordinance, which empowered the authorities to detain them indefinitely without any stated charge against them.

Sensational as this case was, it was overshadowed in importance by the Chittagong Riots of August, 1931. These were freely termed "Hindu-Moslem riots," not only by the Government and the ordinary ill-informed British journalist, but even by writers and papers of some repute in apparent ignorance that there was even another version to be considered.<sup>1</sup> The facts of the case are as follows:

On August 1st, 1931, the Calcutta *Statesman*, (a British-owned daily) quoted European "Royalist" views favouring "*a vigorous policy of reprisal and summary vengeance*" (against Indian Terrorists) and endorsed the view that terrorism must be driven out by terror. Similar propaganda was carried on for some time in this manner, the *Statesman* publishing a black list of offending nationalist journals,

including the *Panchajanya* of Chittagong, which will be mentioned later.

In spite, however, of threats from Indian Terrorists on the one hand and European "Royalists" on the other, there appeared reason to believe that the Government had full control of the situation. Mr. W. D. R. Prentice, of the Bengal Government (Political Department), in presenting his demand for a supplementary grant for the police, referred to the precautions that had been taken to ensure safety in Chittagong.<sup>2</sup> This is important in view of the intensity and long duration of the riots only a month later, and the fact that they eventually came to an end *without firing by the police*—a "necessity" to which they have so often been driven by much smaller disturbances.

On August 30th the Police Inspector of Chittagong (a Moslem) was murdered. The alleged "Hindu-Moslem riots" took place during the night after this event and on the following day. On September 1st the *Calcutta Statesman* published the news as "COMMUNAL RIOTING AT CHITTAGONG," emphasising the fact that the murdered man was a Mohammedan and his assailant a Hindu. The next day the *Statesman* announced the restoration of order by the police after damage had been done worth a crore of rupees.<sup>3</sup>

On September 3rd a public meeting was held in the Albert Hall, Calcutta, and a committee of well-known Indians (including the editor of a Moslem paper) was appointed to enquire into the disturbances at Chittagong. Four days later this non-official committee arrived at Chittagong and proceeded to visit the scenes of disturbance, to take evidence from eye-witnesses and sufferers, and to take photographs of scenes of destruction.<sup>4</sup>

The authorities refused all assistance, but shortly after this an official enquiry was ordered by the Government. The non-official enquiry committee protested against the Government enquiry being conducted by the Divisional Commissioner, whom they described as "one of the persons whose conduct required, and requires, investigation."

The enquiry by the non-official committee terminated on September 3rd. Its main conclusions, which were unanimous, were:

(1) *That disturbances were caused by British officials and non-officials with Mohammedan police.*

(2) That looting was carried on at police instigation and with their protection.

(3) That the motive was to terrorise people, especially Hindus.

The committee in its report cited a considerable number of witnesses, both Hindu and Moslem. They claimed that *there was no evidence of strife between the Hindu and Moslem communities, in spite of efforts to create such strife.* They said that attacks were principally directed against those who had incurred official displeasure, including lawyers engaged in the defence of persons accused in the Armoury Raid Case.

*Instances of alleged outrages cited included :*

(a) Raid by "Europeans"<sup>5</sup> armed with revolvers on *Panchajanya* Press (the Nationalist newspaper mentioned above). The press was broken up with large hammers. Names of some of the alleged raiders were given in the report.

(b) Beating to death of an old man, the father of a political "suspect."

(c) Brutal assault on a woman by three Gurkhas.<sup>6</sup>

(d) Flogging of the biggest boys in two schools by police under British officers. The boys selected were said to be those who wore Gandhi caps.

By this time the Chittagong disturbance, though dismissed as a "communal riot" by the English papers both in India and the British Isles, had assumed grave political importance in Bengal among Indians and thoughtful Englishmen. A pamphlet on Chittagong was prepared by Christopher Ackroyd, Professor of History at St. Paul's College, Calcutta, and circulated to the members of the Calcutta Missionary Conference. As a result of this pamphlet a resolution was passed by the Conference on October 5th, 1931, regretting disquieting reports of the Chittagong riots *and their effects on public opinion*, also asking for an "independent inquiry."

An attack was made on Ackroyd almost immediately in the *Statesman* of October 11th and in the *London Observer*

the following day. It is perhaps worth noting that the main case against Ackroyd was based on his alleged obstruction of the police in their duties. A student had been arrested in St. Paul's College on October 2nd in a political dacoity case. When the police searched his room the following day, Ackroyd and Dr. Bridge (the college Principal) challenged a policeman as to why he was carrying with him a piece of blood-stained cloth.<sup>7</sup> *As the policeman was unable to explain this piece of cloth*, it was marked by the college authorities to the effect that it was not found among the student's possessions. For this "interference" the college authorities had been threatened with prosecution by the British Police Commissioner of Calcutta. The incident is instructive in helping us to understand the meaning of the word "disloyalty" in India.

Ackroyd left India on November 19th, his position having been made impossible by the *Statesman* and the European Association. St. Paul's College is dependent on a Government grant. The Chittagong affair came to the fore again on February 18th, 1932, when, in answer to questions in the Bengal Legislative Council, Mr. W. D. R. Prentice officially admitted that two parties of military police, *each under a British officer*, visited two schools on August 31st, 1931, as stated in the non-official report, and that

"Two boys of the Patiya School and eighteen of the Rahatali School were chastised. Boys of the higher classes at the Saroatali School were chastised. *No teacher appears to have been chastised.*"<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Prentice made no attempt to explain or justify the amazing conduct of the military police, and in reply to a succession of further questions as to the nature of the chastisement, etc., merely replied, "I have nothing to add."<sup>9</sup>

The other members of the Bengal Government seem to have been of the same opinion as Mr. Prentice; for they, too, had nothing to add. *They refused to publish the report of the official committee on the Chittagong disturbance*, as they said it was not of public interest. A further sidelight on the Government's attitude to information may be found in the following extract from the *Bengal Emergency Powers*

*Ordinance* (Clause 13, sub-clauses 1 and 2), which enforced the following provisions among others in the Chittagong District:

"No person shall communicate any information regarding the military and police forces. If any newspaper publishes any such information the owner, publisher, editor, and printer of such newspaper shall be held liable for such publication."

The Secretary of the Indian Journalist's Association enquired from the Government as to the exact application of this ordinance. Might papers report clashes between the police and the public? Might they report injuries, arrests, searches, offences, quartering of troops or punitive police on towns or villages? The Chief Secretary of the Bengal Government (Mr. W. S. Hopkins) replied in a letter dated Calcutta, December 19th, 1931, as follows:

"Government are not prepared to give a ruling on the cases referred to in your letter. . . . The Commissioner of the Chittagong Division has full authority to pass for publication any news items that he thinks fit, and Government do not intend to interfere with his discretion in the matter.

"It is understood that the Commissioner has already made satisfactory arrangements for the release of news items for the Press."

Like the Government he represented, this Commissioner was evidently to be his own law, his own judge, his own critic, and his own censor. We may rest assured that he passed for publication such facts and such comments regarding his own regime "as he thought fit."<sup>10</sup>

One last point is worth noting in connection with Chittagong. The late Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta was a well-known Indian barrister who was a member of the non-official committee. During his stay in England in the winter of 1931-32 he had been active in drawing attention to this affair.<sup>11</sup> and on his return to his country Mr. Sen Gupta was arrested before he had even left the boat at Bombay. He was sent to join some 1,000 other political prisoners



whom the Government had incarcerated without the formality of a trial; and Indians naturally assumed that his exceptionally hasty arrest was not altogether unconnected with his interest in the Chittagong enquiry. His death has since relieved the Government of its fears.

This story of the so-called Chittagong Riots aptly illustrates the complete unreliability of the common and frequent accounts of communal strife in India, which adorn the British Press. There are in British India over 176,000,000 Hindus and nearly 66,000,000 Mohammedans, two communities which constitute between them the great majority of the population.<sup>12</sup> To assume that these two communities live perpetually in a state of suspended conflict would be to reject completely the evidence of all the mass movements since the War in which they have worked side by side. Nevertheless real communal riots (as distinct from fictitious ones such as that which we have examined) are not unknown in India; and though they are strictly localised in extent they deserve serious examination.<sup>13</sup>

Anti-Indian propaganda has so stressed the variety and antagonisms of Indian races and religions that it is difficult even to approach the problem without prejudice. The assumption made is that all these divisions make it necessary for the British to rule India: a conclusion which is as valid as the argument that the Americans should rule Europe (including Great Britain) because Europeans have never been able to live at peace. Or that New York, where as many languages are to be found as there are in the whole of India, is therefore unfit for democratic institutions.<sup>14</sup>

India is a country as large as Europe minus Russia; and in modern India the greatest mass movement in history is attempting a synthesis of interests that will enable it to throw off a foreign yoke and stabilise its position as an independent and united state.<sup>15</sup> It is an example from which Europe itself might well profit. It will prove no easy achievement; but the serious difficulties in the way are being systematically and successfully tackled by the Indian National Congress. Of these the problem of caste and the Hindu-Moslem question are by far the most formidable.

Evidence is not lacking that in the period which follows

the Mughal conquest of India there was a growing harmony between Hindu and Mohammedan—a fact to which reference has already been made. Wars were not infrequent but they were not religious wars, such as Europe was at that very time experiencing. To-day, though it would not be true to say that religious riots are a common phenomenon (considering the size of the country and the limited areas involved in riots), they are undoubtedly more common than they were two hundred years ago. It is the view of the vast majority of Indians that the responsibility for this state of affairs lies with the British Government.

The policy of *Divide and Rule* may be traced throughout the British connection with India. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald spoke of the "Suspicion that sinister influences have been and are at work on the part of the Government; that Mohammedan leaders have been and are inspired by certain British officials."<sup>16</sup> This did not prevent Mr. MacDonald in later years from employing precisely the same methods in his two administrations as premier of a Labour Government. The admission of this policy is, however, rare among present-day statesmen; for what was accepted in the eighteenth century as a normal tactic is to-day considered too embarrassing for open reference.<sup>17</sup> Earlier administrators, such as Elphinstone, openly declared that their policy was that of Rome.<sup>18</sup>

The ways in which this policy operates are various. There is in the first place the use of troops and police. In times of emergency Hindu districts are occupied by Moslem forces and *vice versa*. This is a very obvious precaution on the part of the Government, which is afraid that the natural sentiments of the Indian mercenaries may at any time reassert themselves. Thus in the Bardoli *Satyagraha* movement of 1928 (the peasants there being mainly Hindus) the Government almost immediately replaced Hindu officials by Mohammedans<sup>19</sup> and brought in Pathan tribesmen for all its more brutal work.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, in the North-West Frontier Province (which is over 90 per cent Moslem) Hindu troops are commonly used to suppress any risings, a famous example being the employment of the Garhwali Rifles to fire on an unarmed crowd in Peshawar in the

Spring of 1930. On that occasion the mutiny of the Garhwalis, who refused to fire on their helpless countrymen, probably gave the Government a bigger shock than the entire Civil Disobedience Movement had occasioned.<sup>21</sup> The Amritsar massacre of 1919, when General Dyer fired continuously into a crowded space from which he had blocked up the only outlet, was actually perpetrated by Gurkhas (Nepalese troops from over the border) who alone could be trusted to fire on a mixed crowd of Hindus, Moslems and Sikhs.<sup>22</sup>

The second method by which the Governments policy operates is closely analogous to the first, but applies almost exclusively to the large towns, particularly Bombay, where it has had most success. It is a method of exploiting poverty and industrial struggles. Not infrequently a careful reading even of the garbled accounts in an English newspaper will show that a much advertised "Communal riot" was in fact a fight between mill workers (both Hindu and Mohammedan) and Pathans, the latter being men brought hundreds of miles to break strikes.<sup>23</sup> The high tension common to such a situation is thus given a communal colouring and rapidly becomes what it is intended to become—a Hindu-Moslem vendetta, demonstrating the "necessity" for British rule and dividing its enemies.<sup>24</sup>

The third method is one which has little real importance in India, but its value to the Government in its propaganda in England and America is enormous. This is the method already indicated in the quotation from MacDonald—the purchase of leaders, not necessarily by direct bribes, but by the offer of office and privilege. The Morley-Minto and Montague-Chelmsford "reforms" represent successive stages by which the Government has sought to strengthen its alliance with the Indian landlords and to detach the Indian industrialists from the nationalist movement. These "movements towards self-government and democracy" (of which the Government of India Act is the most recent example) are in actual fact simply attempts to undergird British imperialism by a strong alliance with the most conservative elements in the country.

The bearing of this on the Hindu-Moslem problem lies

chiefly in the system of "communal representation." In favouring certain classes the Government took care that even those classes should be divided. Hindu and Moslem vote in separate electorates; and in the allocation of the spoils of office between wealthy Hindus and wealthy Moslems the latter are given special treatment. The late Sir Valentine Chirol, a former editor of the *Times of India*, admitted that this policy, inaugurated in the Morley-Minto Reforms, "served to widen the breach between Mohammedans and Hindus at the very moment when India was entering on a new stage of political development."<sup>25</sup>

Such a division of interest between the privileged classes would clearly have no meaning to the mass of Hindus and Mohammedans who have been hitherto unenfranchised and gained nothing either way.<sup>26</sup> But it brought into being powerful organisations professing to represent the two great communities, and it has suited the Government ever since to recognise such organisations as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League in the capacity of true representative bodies. We have thus the paradoxical situation in which Congress, in 1930, was defying the Government with the united support of about 90 per cent. of the population of *all communities* whilst the Aga Khan,<sup>27</sup> Dr. Moonje, and Dr. Ambedkar were co-operating with the Government as "representatives" of the Moslems, the Caste Hindus and the "Untouchables." The situation would have been amusing but for the fact that the entire British daily press entered into this conspiracy and continually advertised the princes, landlords and others *whom the Viceroy had nominated to attend the Conference* as "delegates" of the Indian people.

The fourth and last method which must be noted is closely connected with the third. It is the deliberate instigation of riots by Government *agents provocateurs*, to which Colonel Osburn drew attention in his book *Must England Lose India?* The evidence in this case is too detailed to be dealt with here and in the nature of the case a great deal of it can never be confirmed because of its secret and unofficial character.<sup>28</sup> Few Indians have any belief in the "justice" of British law-courts, and however these may

function in ordinary civil cases it is clear that as they are themselves part of the imperial system, they can hardly be expected to deal impartially with accusations of this sort. If even a few of the innumerable stories told in India by reliable persons both English and Indian are true, then the secret agents of the police have often been responsible for outrages upon Hindu or Moslem religious sentiment, designed to set the two communities at variance. And if they *are* true it is because Lord Elphinstone's policy is still being carried out; which is itself a sufficient reason why no British magistrate or Indian magistrate under British rule would dare to let the matter be judicially exposed.<sup>29</sup>

There is, however, a more indirect and at the same time a more obvious way in which the *agents provocateurs* are known to work; and of this the riots in Bombay during the year 1932 were a terrible example. In this town, whilst all Congress and Nationalist organisations were suppressed and their "volunteers" imprisoned or assaulted by the police, one organisation was permitted to train its volunteer membership openly. This was a Moslem organisation under the leadership of Shaukat Ali, one of those Moslem Communalist leaders to whom reference has already been made. Shaukat Ali, after a series of inflammatory speeches and articles in the *Daily Khilafat* directed against the Congress (which he, like the Government, pretended to be a "Hindu" organisation), picked a quarrel with the Hindus which resulted in a serious riot. Though very few people participated actively in the chaos that followed, the injury to life and property was considerable. Meanwhile the Government, quick to meet nationalist risings with martial law and a reign of terror, remained little more than a spectator of the disorder, which often continued for days on end in spite of the small number of people involved.<sup>30</sup> As to the leader-writers in Fleet Street, they shed more crocodile tears in six weeks over this affair than had flowed down their cheeks for years.<sup>31</sup>

The next aspect of the Hindu-Moslem conflicts which requires attention is its economic background. The position of the Jews in parts of Europe and America, or of the Armenians in Turkey, may help us to understand this

Indian problem, which anti-Semitism in the East End has brought even nearer to us. It is not simply a difference of race or religion that leads to anti-Semitism or Armenian massacres. Where there is general prosperity it is seldom difficult for people of different race or religion to live at peace. But let there be poverty, and one race with a lower standard of living or a higher commercial acumen than another, and there will be friction that can easily be fanned into hatred by any interested party.

In India poverty (as Mr. MacDonald has said) "is not an opinion, it is a fact." Add to this another fact—that economic divisions tend to follow lines of caste or sect—and the basis of "communalism" is complete. Thus the Parsees are the great commercial community. The Marwaris (among the Hindus) and some of the Pathans (among the Moslems) are the money-lenders of India. Past conquests and reconquests or the deliberate policy of the British has mapped out the land in such a way that Moslem peasantry may be found under a Hindu prince or landlord, while Hindus may be tenants of Moslem *zemindars*.

A little careful reading even of an English newspaper will often show how a "Hindu-Moslem riot" was in actual fact an economic struggle, tinged or inflamed by religious sentiment, but rooted ultimately in the gnawing hunger of the peasantry, for which British rule itself is chiefly responsible. Here, for example, is an exceptionally honest official communiqué on some riots in Sind which was published in the *Midland Daily Telegraph*:<sup>32</sup>

"The population of the village is almost entirely Mohammedan, with a small section of Hindu money-lenders and traders to whom many of the Mohammedans are indebted. Communal feeling is, therefore, aggravated by economic causes."

In Dacca (Bengal) the cause of riots in recent years has been admitted in our papers to be the same—an attack on Hindu money-lenders by Mohammedan peasantry. Old Hindu law (before our civilisation supplanted it) limited the exactions that a money-lender could extort from his debtor; but in pre-British times there was a better safeguard

than any law. Dacca was then the centre of the muslin industry, and world-famous for its trade. There was then prosperity and no occasion for communal feuds, so that even as late as 1839 Dr. Taylor was able to write in his *Topography of Dacca* :

“Religious quarrels between Hindus and Mohammedans are of rare occurrence. These two classes live in perfect peace and concord.”

To-day Dacca exhibits no signs of its ancient wealth and industry. The people of modern Dacca are among the poorest in the world's poorest country; and with poverty there has come the so-called religious riot.

A similar example is afforded by the following extract from the Simon Report. It concerns the Moplah Rising of 1921, a favourite example of Indian communalism that is often found in British propaganda:

“The Moplahs are a sturdy Mohammedan people of Malabar, on the west coast of the Madras Presidency. They are mainly the tenants of Hindu landowners, and from time to time their economic grievances have led them to resort to violence as a means of redress.”<sup>33</sup>

It would surely be difficult to find a more complete condemnation of the administration than we have here: an admission that the government which boasts itself the defender of the rights of the poor should have allowed such a state of affairs to exist. We may also note that when the Moplahs (having no other means of protest or redress) sought to achieve their object by violence, the Government suppressed them by the same method and left their grievances unalleviated.<sup>34</sup> This example helps to explain the growing alliance between the landed interests in India and the Government, which upholds the claims of the landlord to the ownership of the soil.

For some time it has been a sort of stock argument among British propagandists that if the British left India the warlike races (especially the Moslems) would over-run the country, annihilating the peaceful Hindus with fire and sword.<sup>35</sup> So while we are told at one moment that the

Moslems are against the Nationalist Movement and on the side of the Government, a moment later we are informed that Britain is holding India in order to protect the wretched and defenceless Hindus from these same Moslems. From which one is left to conclude that the Hindus are clamouring to be killed whilst the Moslems are begging the British to stay and keep them from committing murder.

Thus when the Afridis raided the North-West Frontier in 1930, most of the British papers pointed out how necessary it was for the British to remain in India and protect the poor Indians from these fierce tribesmen. Unfortunately there were others in Fleet Street who preferred to see in these raids the treachery and guile of Indian rebels who had deliberately incited the Afridis to attack the British. Consequently while touching stories were being told of Indian families rescued from the raiders by gallant British airmen, the *Daily Herald* told us that "sympathy with the raiders continues to be strong in the city"<sup>36</sup> (Peshawar), while the *Daily Mail* Special Correspondent wrote that "these inroads have for the first time been sympathetically regarded in British India." The *Daily Mail* even published a story of an officer captured by the Afridis who reported on his release that "the tribesmen were not fighting for personal gain but for the Indian Congress and Moslem Movements," and brought a message from an Afridi chief demanding Gandhi's release from prison.<sup>37</sup>

In its zeal to malign Gandhi and the Indian Nationalists, the *Daily Mail* probably got much nearer the truth about the Afridi raids than did most of the British papers. The Afridis are Moslems, and over 90 per cent of the population of the North-West Frontier Province is of the same religion. Behind the *Daily Mail* story is the actual fact that the Moslems of the Province are united with the Moslems beyond the Border on a very vital point, which is their love of freedom and dislike of British interference. The Moslems of the North-West Frontier Province are as much opposed as any section of the Indian people to British rule and the Afridis have to submit to periodic bombing by British aeroplanes. In such circumstances it is not remarkable that the Moslems of the Province should be in close sympathy



with those beyond the Border, and that both should look for their liberation to the Nationalist Movement.

It was actually the case that after the commencement of Civil Disobedience in Spring, 1930, notwithstanding all the forces working for disunity, which we have already surveyed, no section of the Indian population took a more active part in the struggle than these Moslems of the Frontier. Under the leadership of Abdul Ghaffar Khan ("the Gandhi of the Frontier" as he is called), a vast Moslem organisation was formed, known by an Urdu name meaning "Servants of God," and popularly described as "Red-Shirts." This movement was affiliated to the Congress. So widespread was the success of the Nationalist Movement in the Frontier Province, and so brutal the measures by which the Government attempted to suppress it, that they have found it necessary to exercise a censorship unequalled in its rigidity in any other part of India. Not only was there the usual muzzling of the Press, prohibition of free speech and censorship of wires, but for the better part of two years the Province endured a system of martial law in all but name. Those attempting to investigate the position were either refused admission to the Province or summarily deported. Reports were destroyed and their publishers arrested.<sup>38</sup>

Any talk of numbers or percentages, so far as Congress support in India is concerned is, of course, bound to be a matter of conjecture. The Government itself, with all its ready assurances that the Congress represents only a small minority of Indians, has taken very good care that there shall be no means of ascertaining what really are the wishes of India's millions; and it is reasonable to assume of every despotic Government that it is despotic just because it dare not face a popular and democratic verdict on its actions. That is as obvious as the fact that the Government in India cultivates secrecy, censorship, and the distortion of facts because it has everything to lose in prestige by the truth being known.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless some sort of estimate of the Moslem support behind the Congress is possible, and a few observations on this point may be worth recording.

The observations of the present author were summarised in a memorandum written for the interest of English friends in 1930; and the following extract from this document indicates the character of the Nationalist Movement as he saw it in 1929 and 1930:

"I have spent some months of my time in India travelling with Mr. Gandhi in various parts of India. I observed—what anyone who has done the same can confirm—that everywhere Mr. Gandhi went he was the centre of crowds more vast, more enthusiastic and better disciplined than any that I had seen in any other part of the world. Those crowds were not only to be found in predominantly Hindu parts of the country, but everywhere without distinction; nor was there any opposition or counter-demonstration except by isolated individuals. At Lahore (Christmas, 1929), when Congress met for its annual session, my English papers led me to expect that the Moslems (who are in a majority in the Punjab) and the Sikhs, who form a powerful minority, would break up the Congress camp. Instead I saw the Congress president ride at the head of the most enormous procession I had ever witnessed, while enthusiastic multitudes of Moslems, Hindus and Sikhs lined the roads and crowded the roofs, windows, walls and all available vehicles. The only 'opposition' consisted of six Sikhs with a banner, who departed when politely spoken to by a Congress 'volunteer.'"

Throughout the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 similar scenes were to be observed all over India. And if to-day the unparalleled ferocity of the police has put an end to much of this public demonstration, it only means that the movement has been driven underground, and not by any means that it has been killed.

Among the leaders of the Congress, Moslems have been numerous and conspicuous. Men such as the late Dr. Ansari, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Dr. Syed Mahmud and the late Abbas Tyabji have played a prominent part in the Movement, in recent years. Moreover, their Moslem followers gave a bigger quota of Civil Disobedience prisoners in proportion to the total numerical strength of the Moslems

than any other community except the Parsees. These Moslem Nationalists have the support of the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema*, an All-India body of Moslem divines, and their organisation (the Nationalist Muslim Party) proved itself in 1930 by far the most powerful Moslem organisation in India, enrolling over 100,000 "volunteers" during the period of Civil Disobedience. Needless to say this organisation was entirely ignored by those who nominated the "Delegates" to the Round Table Conference and attempted to create the impression that Indian Moslems were represented by such persons as the Aga Khan. Similarly the decision of the All-Parties Sikh Conference on November 23rd, 1930, to support the Congress programme was unnoticed in the British Press.

"I am telling you God's truth," said Gandhi in one of his speeches in England, "when I say that the Communal question does not matter and should not worry you at all."<sup>40</sup> It sounds like an exaggeration; but considered in relation to the far greater issues before India, upon which the solution of the Hindu-Moslem question itself depends, the statement is literally true. A hundred and fifty years of British rule have done much by deliberate incitement and the increase of poverty to produce friction between Hindu and Moslem. But side by side with this process, in spite of itself, the British administration has produced conditions which must in the end destroy its own work. Foreign rule may subsist upon the division of the people, but in the end it produces the unity of national revolt.<sup>41</sup> Poverty may increase racial or religious conflicts, but in the end it produces the consciousness of class. It was from the Congress hospitals, where Hindu and Moslem, caste and outcaste, lay side by side, victims of the *lathi* and the bullet, that Indian Nationalism drew its inspiration in 1930—even when the police descended upon those hospitals and hurled the victims of savage and indecent assaults into the streets. And it will be in the villages and the factories, where Hindus and Moslems suffer from the same robberies of rent and interest, that the social revolution will find its strength, superseding nationalism in the coming years as the spear-head of Indian liberation and racial unity.<sup>42</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Government itself announced the Chittagong disturbance as a "communal riot" and emphasised this diagnosis by issuing an order in 1932 compelling all Hindu youths in certain districts of Chittagong to carry identity cards—red, blue and white for "detenues," suspects and innocents respectively! In 1934 all Hindu middle-class youths were, in some parts of Chittagong, forbidden to leave their houses for a week.

<sup>2</sup> Bengal Legislative Council Debates, August 3rd, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> £750,000.

<sup>4</sup> The events of March 19th, 1935, at Karachi, make an interesting comparison. On this occasion British troops fired on a Moslem procession in honour of a man who had been hanged. Twenty-seven persons were officially admitted to have been killed and 134 wounded in this firing (See the *Evening News*, October 19th, 1935) and Karachi was supposed to have been "saved from a massacre" by this wanton murder. Yet so far were the communities in Karachi from "rioting" on a communal basis that the leaders of both Hindus and Moslems protested and demanded an enquiry. This was flatly refused by the Bombay Government, which instead took extraordinary measures to prevent reports of the event from being published in the Press.

<sup>5</sup> For some reason this euphemism is normally employed in India for the British.

<sup>6</sup> Foreign mercenaries employed by the Government.

<sup>7</sup> This sort of occurrence is as common in India as the activity of the *agents provocateurs*, mentioned later in this chapter, and it is almost as rarely possible to expose it. In Calcutta, however, on April 7th, 1932, an Indian magistrate (Mr. Fazel Karim) did actually fine a police informer for contravening the Explosives Substance Act. The man was carrying a bomb to implicate some person in a false charge, and the bomb exploded in a taxi, making prosecution inevitable.

<sup>8</sup> Bengal Legislative Council Debates, Feb. 18th, 1932.

<sup>9</sup> The Government would only admit that there had been "breaches of discipline" on the part of its officials and that "suitable action" had been taken against them; but it refused details as to the nature of these breaches of discipline." (Bengal Council Debates, Aug. 16th, 1932.)

<sup>10</sup> The trials of Chittagong by no means ended with this episode. In September, 1932, there was another clash—this time a raid on the European Institute by the remnant of the Indian Terrorist organisation. The *News Chronicle* of October 27th, 1932, announced the imposition of a collective fine of over £6,000 on the inhabitants of Chittagong and several neighbouring villages for alleged refusal to betray these Terrorists.

<sup>11</sup> Sen Gupta had written a pamphlet, published in London, exposing the Chittagong affairs and the shooting of defenceless prisoners, in the detention camp at Hijli.

<sup>12</sup> The total population of British India is nearly 255 million, so that other communities (Sikhs, Indian Christians, etc.), constitute extremely small minorities. The total population of the whole country (i.e. inclusive of the Indian Native States) is about 250,000,000, but the people of these states are again mainly Hindus and Moslems.

<sup>13</sup> This chapter does not concern itself with the psychological causes of communal tension, which have been ably examined by Dr. Clifford Manshardt in *The Hindu-Muslim Problem in India*. (London, 1936.) The defect of this book is its obsession with problems which only affect the wealthier classes, but it has much useful material.

<sup>14</sup> It would be easy to show that the "riots" between different communities in Europe in the past 100 years (especially the riot of 1914-18) have been infinitely bloodier than any past or present conflicts in India.

<sup>15</sup> Much has been made of India's "222 languages," which were given wide publicity in the Simon Report. This was the figure given in the 1921 Census, which had increased to 225 by the year 1931. Some of the Indo-Chinese languages enumerated to make up this number include the following, according to the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*:

Language	Number of Speakers		
Kabui .. ..	..	..	4
Andro .. ..	..	..	1
Kasui .. ..	..	..	11
Bhranu .. ..	..	..	15
Thukuni .. ..	..	..	26
Aka .. ..	..	..	26
Nora .. ..	..	..	2
Tairong .. ..	..	..	12

The 1921 figure was itself almost double the figure given in 1901, when the Census gave the number of Indian languages as 147. The increase was achieved by including every dialect. See Note 39 regarding Burma.

<sup>16</sup> *The Awakening of India*, by J. R. MacDonald. Lord Olivier, who was Secretary of State for India in the Labour Government of 1924, is credited with a similar statement. Torrens' *Empire in Asia* gives a very full account of the development of the *Divide and Rule* policy up to the time when this book was published, in 1872.

<sup>17</sup> See *The Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, by Thompson and Garratt, p. 114.

<sup>18</sup> According to Major Basu's *Consolidation of the Christian Power in India* (Chap. VI), Elphinstone's view was that "*Divide et impera* was the old Roman motto, and it should be ours."

<sup>19</sup> Similarly in November 1933, when there was "trouble" with the Hindu population of Poona, troops from Baluchistan and the Punjab were used.

<sup>20</sup> The Pathans are Moslems and would have been brought 48 hours' journey from the North-West Frontier of India.

<sup>21</sup> A fuller account of the Garhwali "Mutiny" is given in Chapter XV.

<sup>22</sup> Mr. G. W. Steevens noted in 1899 that the Gurkhas "would be on our side though all India were against us." (*In India*, p. 358).

<sup>23</sup> A B.U.P. cable, published in the *News-Chronicle* (April 4th, 1932) states that: "Bombay dock-strikers to-day attacked a lorry carrying Pathan strike-breakers, beat the driver to death and set the Pathans' houses on fire. Police fired on the strikers and thirty-two were injured."

<sup>24</sup> This applies particularly to Bombay, where nearly all the so-called communal riots have started with fighting between Hindu mill workers

and Pathan blacklegs. The hungry tribesmen from the hills are naturally ignorant of the situation in the cities, and when offered work in Bombay have no idea of the true reason for which they are taken there. Even the rioting in 1936, though ostensibly on a religious issue, must have been stimulated by economic conflicts in the past, which inevitably increased the communal tension. The official *Report of the Bombay Riots Enquiry Committee* in 1929 specifically mentioned among the causes the fact that "the Pathans had taken the places of some of the Oil Installation strikers." It also mentioned that "Some of the Pathans are money-lenders who had advanced money to mill-hands at usurious rates of interest," and points out that Pathan money-lenders were raided and (in one case) their documents destroyed. (See also *Hansard*, Feb. 18th, 1929.)

<sup>25</sup> For many years after the Mutiny of 1857 the Government tended to favour the Hindus, the fear of the Moslems having been revived by the attempt to restore the Mughal dynasty. The growth of a nationalist movement among the Hindu majority at the end of last century led to a reversal of this process; and the Moslem upper classes were given privileges out of proportion to their numerical strength, in such a way that no democratic nationalist movement could outbid the Government in its offers without sacrificing its democratic and national character.

<sup>26</sup> That is to say, 95 per cent of the Adult population in the past, and to-day about 70 per cent.

<sup>27</sup> According to an article by Mr. C. A. Lyon in the *Sunday Express* (Dec. 12th, 1936), the Aga Khan's claims to distinction include the fact that "during the war he performed many delicate tasks for the British Government. He kept the Mohammedans of India loyal all through when there was much dangerous unrest." In Egypt he performed a similar office.

<sup>28</sup> It is, of course, clear that the *agent provocateur* is powerless in the absence of some fundamental cause of strife. An article in *Great Britain and the East* (October 22nd, 1936) states this basic proposition clearly with special reference to the 1936 riots in Bombay: "The riots . . . may have had many excuses. But they have only one cause. That cause is social and economic. . . . The British *Raj* has shown one failure after another. . . . An Indian evil must be attacked with Indian methods." This interesting and startling admission from such a source must be considered in conjunction with the British policy as analysed here and the outline of economic causes given later in the chapter.

<sup>29</sup> Two examples of the activities of *agents provocateurs* were given by Mr. Verrier Elwin in a circular letter from Poona in 1930. In one case a C.I.D. man endeavoured to incite a peaceful crowd to throw stones in Bombay. He was recognised and his identity proved. In the other case a Government agent visited the Principal of a Missionary College and asked permission to stir up the Moslem students against the Hindus.

<sup>30</sup> Criminals who had been released from jail to make room for political prisoners joined in these riots and increased the disturbance considerably.

<sup>31</sup> The careless mendacity of the press can be illustrated from innumerable examples. The *News-Chronicle* of Aug. 6th, 1930, published a story under the caption "Hindu Kills Eleven Mohammedans." In

the report that followed it appeared that this "Hindu" was "a notorious Sikh robber." One can only grasp the wild inaccuracy and misleading nature of such a report by assuming that a man who happened to have been born a Methodist killed eleven people who happened to be Anglicans in the course of a highway robbery, and that the whole story was announced under the heading "Quaker kills Anglicans." The same paper on March 22nd, 1935, recorded a debate in the Indian Legislative Assembly regarding the way in which the Government had handled a riot in Karachi. "All the elected members," said the *News Chronicle*, "together with the Congress members voted for Mr. Gauba's motion, while the Nationalists, consisting of Hindus and Sikhs, voted with the Government or remained neutral." On this it is only necessary to comment that the Nationalists include Mohammedans as well as Hindus and Sikhs, that the Congress is itself the biggest Nationalist party, and that all Congress members of the Assembly are elected members (not being Government nominees); and the whole report is clearly senseless. The *Daily Express* of Feb. 29th, 1932, after providing its readers with a lurid picture of the Holy City of Benares, confirmed its accuracy by announcing that this city (which is on the Ganges) was on the North-West Frontier. And so on.

<sup>32</sup> August 19th, 1930.

The author collected a number of similar press extracts between 1930 and 1936, and a careful study of the papers where communal riots have been referred to will provide the reader with evidence of the same kind.

Dr. Clifford Manshardt points out that both Hindus and Moslems lend money at interest, though it is against the religious teachings of the latter to do so. He shows how this money-lending comes to have a "communal" significance and instances his personal memory of Hindu agitation in Bombay for revenge on the Pathan money-lenders, also similar agitation by Punjab Moslems against Hindu *Banyas*. (*The Hindu-Muslim Problem*, pp. 56-58.)

Mr. John Hoyland in *The Case for India* (London, 1929, p. 112), mentions his personal experiences of Muslim money-lenders in Nagpur and Bombay with reference to communal rioting.

<sup>33</sup> Simon Report, Part I, p. 249.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Manshardt states that "there is scarcely a grave communal disturbance in the rural areas in which the thread of economic oppression cannot be distinguished in the tangled skein of causes." (*The Hindu-Muslim Problem*, p. 54.)

<sup>35</sup> The famous chestnut "not a virgin or a rupee would be left in Bengal" is periodically repeated by various authors as an original observation. Miss Mayo was of their number (*Mother India*, p. 282) and attributed to a Mahratha chief in 1920 the remark which had been attributed forty years previously to a Rajput. Though this Rajput (Sir Pertab Singh) disclaimed the honour of authorship, the orphaned epigram continues to find numerous fathers.

<sup>36</sup> *Daily Herald*, August 14th, 1930.

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Mail*, August 15th, 1930.

<sup>38</sup> A Commission of Enquiry into the state of affairs in the North-West Frontier Province was set up by the Congress after the shooting at Peshawar in April, 1930. Mr. V. J. Patel, ex-President of the Indian

Legislative Assembly, presided over this Commission. It was refused permission to enter the Province, but managed to interview witnesses in spite of this handicap, and published a report which was promptly confiscated wherever the police could lay hands on it. Mr. Verrier Elwin, who managed to enter the Province two years later (in 1932) was deported as soon as the Government realised his presence and the nature of his mission. He was searched with the greatest care, but saved his notes by an ingenious but simple device which he explained to the present author. These notes were made the basis of his pamphlet *India: The North-West Frontier*. (See Chapter XV.) The author has in his possession envelopes of this period bearing the Peshawar postmark and the official stamp "passed by Censor," to bear witness to the Government's anxiety that no one in England should know what was happening in the biggest Moslem province of India.

<sup>39</sup> The hypocrisy of most anti-Indian propaganda on this subject is illustrated by Mr. Horace Alexander in *The Indian Ferment* (p. 171). He points out that in Burma "there is no communal strife, no awkward native States, no caste system or depressed classes . . . and there is a very widespread system of primary education." In spite of these facts even the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were delayed several years in their application to Burma. To make up for this Burmese deficiency, the 1921 Census discovered 103 Tibeto-Chinese "languages" in Burma. These "languages", which accounted for nearly half the 222 (now 225) "languages" of India and Burma, included seventeen spoken by less than 100 persons; thirty-nine spoken by less than 1,000; sixty-five by less than 10,000 and ninety-one by less than 100,000. The Simon Report even admitted that "seven-tenths of the whole population . . . speak Burmese or a closely allied language." The fact that the same can be said of Hindustani in India has been discreetly suppressed; although the 1921 Census Report (Vol. I, Part I, p. 199) states that "There is no doubt that there is a common element in the main languages of Northern and Central India which renders their speakers without any great conscious change in their speech mutually intelligible to one another, and this common basis already forms an approach to a *lingua franca* over a large part of India." English, on the other hand, though it is the universal medium of secondary education, is only spoken by a very small percentage of the population. The language problem, like communalism, has been magnified out of all proportion to its importance.

<sup>40</sup> It is significant that Mr. Brelvi, the Moslem editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, declared at a meeting of Nationalist Moslems in Bombay that if Gandhi capitulated to the demands of Moslem communalists, Nationalist Moslems would fight him on the issue. (*New India*, April 16th, 1931.)

<sup>41</sup> Professor Moon in *Imperialism and World Politics* noted the fact that if no union had existed before between the peoples of India the British would have provided it, since "antagonism to British rule" was drawing them together as a nation.

<sup>42</sup> In the Trade Union and Workers' organisations, this prophecy of Hindu-Moslem unity may already be regarded as a fact. For a further study of Hindu-Moslem unity and of further facts relating to communal riots the reader is referred to Brailsford's *Rebel India* (pp. 172-5), and Brockway's *Indian Crisis* (pp. 171-3).



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE EVOLUTION OF ANGLO-INDIAN MYTHOLOGY

HORACE WILSON, in his preface to Mill's *History of British India*, has remarked upon the "unrelenting pertinacity" with which Mill "labours to establish the barbarism of the Hindus."

"With very imperfect knowledge, with materials exceedingly defective, with an implicit faith in all testimony hostile to Hindu pretensions, he has elaborated a portrait of the Hindus which has no resemblance whatever to the original, and which almost outrages humanity. As he represents them, the Hindus are not only on a par with the least civilised nations of the Old and New World, but they are plunged almost without exception in the lowest depths of immorality and crime. Considered merely in a literary capacity, the description of the Hindus in the *History of British India* is open to censure for its obvious unfairness and injustice; but in the effects which it is likely to exercise upon the connexion between the people of England and the people of India, it is chargeable with more than literary demerit: its tendency is evil; it is calculated to destroy all sympathy between the rulers and the ruled; to preoccupy the minds of those who issue annually from Great Britain, to monopolize the posts of honour and power in Hindustan, with an unfounded aversion towards those over whom they exercise that power.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson was of the opinion that "a harsh and illiberal spirit has of late years prevailed in the conduct and councils of the rising service in India, which owes its origin to impressions imbibed in early life from the *History* of Mr. Mill."<sup>2</sup> This fact was no accident, nor can Mill be debited with individual responsibility for what was, in point of fact, a process inherent in the growth of imperialism. Mill

was simply an outstanding example of an inevitable phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

The steady growth of race prejudice as a psychological concomitant of imperialism can best be realised by comparing the observations of earlier English commentators with the *obiter dicta* of the present-day. Thus Ovington, writing in 1696, commends the honesty of the East India Company's Indian servants.<sup>4</sup> Warren Hastings found the Hindus "gentle and benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown them, and less prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted than any people on the face of the earth."<sup>5</sup> Hastings no doubt had reason to be grateful for this fact. Bishop Heber's tribute of praise was even stronger; while Elphinstone found the villagers "everywhere amiable, affectionate to their families, kind to their neighbours and towards all but the government honest and sincere."<sup>6</sup>

Elphinstone even went so far as to claim that there was less crime in India than in England, not excluding the activities of the Thugs and Dacoits. The most depraved Hindus according to him were "the dregs of our own great towns." Sir John Malcolm, in more qualified terms, found Hindus no worse than other people, though in the early days of British rule there seem to have been frank admissions by our officials that the national character was deteriorating under foreign domination. "The longer we possess a province, the more common and grave does perjury become," was the opinion of one authority.<sup>7</sup>

Even in Elphinstone's time signs were not lacking that a new generation of British administrators was coming into being, which had neither the intimate knowledge nor the frankness of the Company's earlier servants.

"Englishmen in India," wrote Elphinstone, "have less opportunity than might be expected of forming opinions of the native character. Even in England, few know much of the people beyond their own class, and what they do know, they learn from newspapers and publications of a description which does not exist in India. In that country also, religion and manners put bars to our intimacy with the natives, and limit the

number of transactions as well as the free communication of opinions. We know nothing of the interior of families but by report, and have no share in those numerous occurrences of life in which the amiable parts of character are most exhibited."<sup>8</sup>

Prejudice had already reached formidable proportions by the time that Mill wrote his *History of British India*. Max Müller points out that Mill was chiefly guided by Dubois, a French missionary, and certain other selected authorities, "all of them neither very competent nor very unprejudiced judges."<sup>9</sup> Not content with this, Mill "omits the qualifications which even these writers felt bound to give to their wholesale condemnation of the Hindus." Mill began the fashion among subsequent British historians of attributing almost all Hindu habits or practices to some mean or despicable motive, and dismissing all Hindu culture with contempt. Thus, for example, of the Hindus' alleged "litigiousness"<sup>10</sup> he writes that

"As often as courage fails them in seeking more daring gratification to their hatred and revenge, their malignity finds a vent in the channel of litigation."<sup>11</sup>

Mill was probably the first English writer to popularise the idea that Hindus are by nature dishonest and untruthful. Ignoring such evidence as we have already noted on this subject, he cites the views of "exceptionable witnesses," as Wilson calls them, "the missionaries by their calling and Orme and Buchanan by their prejudices."<sup>12</sup> He proves the prevalence of perjury in the courts, but gives no indication, as his editor points out, that:

"The form of oath imposed—the taking of an oath at all, was so repulsive to the feelings of respectable Hindus, that they have ever avoided as much as possible giving evidence at all; and their place has been supplied by the lowest and most unprincipled, whose testimony has been for sale."<sup>13</sup>

So horrible is Mill's picture of the Hindus that those who credit it may well wonder how such a race survived at all.<sup>14</sup> The wildest observations pass for judgment. "A Brahmin,"

writes Mill, for example (quoting from an eighteenth century authority) "may put a man to death when he lists": a statement which is, and always has been, a lie.

In spite of the experience of Indian hospitality which has been the common lot of those who have lived among Indians on a basis of equality,<sup>15</sup> Mill finds European witnesses prepared to deny even this virtue to the Hindus. His evidence in this case is mainly the "inhospitality" of the people to their English conquerors. Even Hindu music, to which no particular political significance could be attached, is dismissed by Mill in a single paragraph with the remark that "all Europeans, even those who are most disposed to eulogise the attainments of the Hindus, unite in describing the music of that people as unpleasing and void both of expression and art."<sup>16</sup>

This last example from the writings of Mill brings us to the point where the cultural gulf is discernible between the Indian people and those who are their interpreters to the British public. Apart from the untruth of the statement that "all Europeans" shared such a preposterous opinion, it is clear that this dismissal of Indian music is comparable to the use of the word "gibberish" for a language one cannot understand. Mill's attitude, so blatantly exposed in this statement, was to become the criterion of orthodoxy in future English writers.

From a passage already quoted it will be observed that Wilson considered the evidence of missionaries as "exceptionable." Elphinstone appears to have had the same view, in that he held them to be among those who "do not see the virtuous portion of a nation."<sup>17</sup> After 1813, with the extension of Christian missions, missionary evidence of a violently prejudiced character became extremely common, and the views of these interested parties were all too readily accepted as "Gospel Truth." There are to-day some 5,000 missionaries in India, representing over a hundred "different abominations," as an Indian Christian once called them; and with a few notable exceptions their influence on Anglo-Indian cultural relations is activated as much by political bias as it is by a Christian contempt for rival religions. The connection between these two aspects of

missionary interests was stressed at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1932, when the report for the past year revealed that:

"Outside the areas where a Godless communism predominated there was no evidence that people were less ready to acquire the Scriptures."<sup>18</sup>

The revolt of 1857 greatly sharpened the cleavage between the conqueror and the conquered. After 1858 no Indian could become a gunner in the Indian Army, the artillery being kept as a British preserve to safeguard against a second mutiny. Until the last year of the Great War no Indian officer could command British troops, and however high he might rise in the Service he was regarded as the junior of a British subaltern. It was clear that by degrees the new civilisation was adapting itself to the caste system; and whilst its Indian prototype decayed, this new rigidity of class distinctions hardened even the existing barriers within the British community.<sup>19</sup> No one without visiting the country could believe how profound is the gulf which separates an English commercial traveller from the humblest member of the "Heaven-born" I.C.S.<sup>20</sup>

Nourished in this atmosphere the Provincial and Central Secretariats "developed" (to quote an ex-editor of the *Times of India*) "the usual tendency of all powerful bureaucracies to believe in their own infallibility."<sup>21</sup> Even Queen Victoria commented upon the "*snobbish* and vulgar overbearing and offensive behaviour of many of our Civil and Political Agents." Her instructions to Lord Curzon, the somewhat inappropriate instrument of this intended change of policy, were that the people of India must be made to

"*feel* that we are masters, but it should be done kindly and not offensively, which alas! is so often the case."<sup>22</sup>

These good intentions proved powerless to produce a really refined and well-bred imperialism. By the end of the nineteenth century the British in India had for the most part given up every attempt to understand the people over whom they ruled, though this did not impede their

determination to carry on the good work. G. W. Stevens, who held that a Westerner could never understand the Hindu mind, was quite clear that British rule was indispensable. Yet he realised that "the new generation of Anglo-Indians is deplorably ignorant of the native languages"<sup>23</sup> and that after a dozen years in the country the average British administrator could not converse with a peasant or read his language.<sup>24</sup>

"Of the life, character and habits of thought of the peasantry—always concealed by Orientals from those in authority over them—the knowledge grows more and more extinct year by year. Statistics accumulate and knowledge decays. The longer we rule over India the less we know it."<sup>25</sup>

The barriers of ignorance and fear produced in the Ruling Race a neurosis of racial hatred, comparable only to the anti-Semitic complex of Fascist Germany. This is no appropriate place in which to examine the individual expressions of sadism directed against Indians by the officer class, but a detailed account of several cases will be found in an excellent book by Lt.-Colonel Osburn.<sup>26</sup> It is the contention of this author that the British public school system is largely responsible for the revolting brutalities which he describes; and this hypothesis can very well be integrated with our general conclusions regarding the cultural products of imperialism.

Whilst prejudice and ignorance were becoming the dominant characteristics of the "Men on the Spot," ignorance and indifference were equally obvious in the attitude of the British public. There is the sharpest contrast between the speeches of Burke in the eighteenth century and those of Macaulay in the nineteenth, though each represented liberal thought in his own generation.<sup>27</sup> The people of India had become, in the jargon of Macaulay, "a race debased by three thousand years of despotism and priestcraft."<sup>28</sup> And the very speech in which these words occur was made to a half empty House of Commons which was laying down the whole future of India in the Charter Act of 1833—

"a circumstance which may surprise those who are not aware that on a Wednesday, and with an Indian question on the paper, Cicero replying to Hortensius would hardly draw a quorum."<sup>29</sup> .

Reference has already been made to this indifference among British politicians to the fate of the Indian people, unless commercial interests are seriously threatened. "Parliament eases its conscience," wrote John Dickinson over eighty years ago, "by exhorting those that govern there to govern paternally, just as Isaak Walton exhorts his angler, in hooking a worm, to handle him as if he loved him."<sup>30</sup> With that excellent precept Parliamentary responsibility ends; and the concern of the British public is even less. As for the intelligentsia, "The mention of the word 'India' is guaranteed to empty the smallest lecture-hall in Oxford."<sup>31</sup>

Dimly the Englishman has been made to realise that India is something valuable which "we" must keep at all costs. This conception of a national "we," having some common interest in owning India, is accurately expressed by A. E. Duchesne in *Democracy and Empire*. Britain, he says,

"has need of India. If it had not been for India the British Empire had never been, at any rate, in its present form. India has supplied from Elizabeth's reign onward, precisely that stimulus of which our country has stood in need. To the desire to reach India is due maritime enterprise and discovery. To the struggle to obtain India is due our naval and military supremacy as against Holland and France. To our trade with India is due much of our past and present prosperity and wealth. Without India, Lancashire were bankrupt. To our retention of India is due our present Imperial prestige. To our training in and by India is due our practical sagacity in administration."

Meanwhile every effort has been made to create a similar hypnosis among the Indian peoples themselves. The Government knows as well as the Brahmin priesthood how to exploit superstition; and its wealth and power are used for this end. Sometimes, of course, appalling errors of

judgment are perpetrated. Edward Thompson quotes the example of the Message of King Edward VII, of a "high humorous quality," which was sold in India "by a master-stroke of unconscious humour" on *His Master's Voice* records.<sup>32</sup>

Probably more successful in their effects were the leaflets issued by the Government of the Central Provinces when the Prince of Wales visited India in 1921. These leaflets explained in the vernacular that:

"according to the Hindu Scriptures, the King's Son was a part of God, therefore all Hindu boys should fulfil their religion by assembling to cheer the Prince of Wales."

These leaflets were distributed to schools in the provinces, including a Mission High School whose headmaster, in the letter quoted above, mentions that they were "printed at the taxpayers' expense in a year of scarcity."<sup>33</sup> The object, of course, was to break the Congress boycott of the Prince's tour.

Among less official activities the curious student will find the most astonishing expression of the same inspiration. There is still extant, for example, a report of a meeting held at Grosvenor House on July 11th, 1883, in furtherance of a proposal to translate into the various languages of India the National Anthem of this country, with some additional verses excelling the original in their beauty. The present author came across what may have been one of these translations in an Indian hymn-book, issued in the Central Provinces by the Society of Friends. Most of the literary efforts in this specimen were vernacular translations of familiar Evangelical doggerel, and they were even set to those solid chapel melodies which displease the Indian ear as much as Hindu music displeased Mr. Mill.

Culturally the net effect of the British occupation has been aptly summed up by Graham Wallas in *Human Society* :

"Athens, during the last quarter of the fifth century B.C., was not well governed; and if the British Empire had then existed, and if Athens had been brought within



it, the administration would undoubtedly have been improved in some important aspects. But one does not like to imagine the effect on the intellectual output of the fifth century B.C., if even the best of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's public school subalterns had stalked daily through the agora, snubbing, as he passed, that intolerable bounder, Euripides, or clearing out of his way the probably seditious group that were gathered 'around Socrates.'"<sup>34</sup>

Education itself is largely an emasculating process in India. Its origin was not the indigenous system to which we have referred in a previous chapter, but the needs of the East India Company. Speaking of India ninety-five years ago Sir Claude Hill said: "A prime necessity at that time was the furnishing of clerks capable of doing the work in a manner which would be satisfactory to the English Board of Directors."<sup>35</sup> More grandiloquently the contemporary sponsor of this policy explained himself in words which every educated Indian remembers:

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."<sup>36</sup>

The ultimate effect of this policy, as we have observed, was the creation of a class of unemployed intellectuals which formed the original nucleus of the nationalist movement.<sup>37</sup> Its more immediate results were entirely disastrous. While the primary education of the millions was completely neglected, a de-nationalised minority was brought into being, for which secondary schools and colleges were provided; and here the culture and political prejudices of the ruling race were carefully fostered. The control of the Press and the banning of enlightened literature completed the process.

The English language is the basis of this educational system, and while the history and literature of his own country are largely forgotten the Indian school-boy is fed on Shakespeare and taught to glory in British military achievements.<sup>38</sup> "Ronald Ross," writes Mr. Brailsford,

"has drawn a mordant picture of a class of children, all with enlarged spleens, struggling to learn by rote a table of the Plantagenet Kings."<sup>39</sup> Of the schools among the primitive tribes Mr. Verrier Elwin writes:

"When the aboriginal does go to school, and that is seldom, he all too often is made obsequious and servile. His spirit is crushed. He learns to respect Brahmins and policemen, but he is not taught how to hold his head high."<sup>40</sup>

It is no wonder that the Census Report should say of these same people that there is "no sign among the peasants of the Central Provinces of a love of education for the sheer pleasure it brings." Commenting upon this statement Mr. Elwin tells us that "wherever education is made pleasurable, the peasants love it."<sup>41</sup> Yet when Elwin attempted to bring this sort of education to the Gonds he found himself barred on every side by a united front consisting of the Government of an Indian State, the local landlords and the British Government's Forest Department.<sup>42</sup> In all villages controlled by these three authorities Elwin was forbidden to open schools, though the Census figures show that only four out of every 1,000 Gonds are literate. Had he been a money-lender, as he points out, he would have been "given every possible facility by everyone."

Since 1921 education has been under the control of Indian Ministers and a small advance has been made.<sup>43</sup> The Simon Report mentions that these Indian Ministers "succeeded to a heritage by no means inspiring" and refers to their "impetuous advances" occasioned by "their almost feverish anxiety to improve it." But the propertied classes enfranchised by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms had neither the will to create a real system of popular education nor the control of adequate funds, most of the Budget being ear-marked by the Government for better purposes, such as the army.<sup>44</sup> In the four Provinces where resolutions demanding compulsory education were passed in the legislatures the funds placed at their disposal by the Provincial Governments proved inadequate to implement this intention <sup>45</sup>

There has even been a decline between 1921 and 1931 in the proportion of pupils at primary schools as compared with those at secondary schools; and the Census Report of 1931 points out that nearly  $9\frac{1}{2}$  crores of rupees are spent annually on secondary education compared with less than 7 crores on the primary schools.<sup>46</sup> The Census Commissioner estimates that two-thirds of the Indian villages to-day have no schools, and his explanation for this state of affairs is completely unconvincing when it is compared with the pre-British state of education or the condition of some of the better governed Indian States, where the more enlightened princes have shown the possibilities of popular education. Burma, as the Census demonstrates, is the exception to the rule. Out of every 1,000 Burmese over the age of five years, 368 are literate—that is to say, nearly 37 per cent of the population, compared with the average of 10 per cent in British India. Comparative Provincial figures are: 11.1 per cent in Bengal, 10.8 per cent in Bombay, 5.5 per cent in the United Provinces and 5.3 per cent in Bihar and Orissa. But, as the Census Commissioner points out:

“Burma is, of course, exceptional, as most of her literacy is obtained in her village monasteries and not through the Education Department.”<sup>47</sup>

With these facts in mind it is interesting to read an article which appeared in a recent number of *Great Britain and the East*. The author notes the discrepancy between the present state of India and the description of India in the early nineteenth century, as given by Sir Thomas Munro. He finds “a consensus of well-informed opinion that will admit that in many respects India enjoyed then a greater measure of prosperity than she can now lay claim to.” Of the education system he says that it

“is completely divorced from national life. . . . Its end is a clerkship and for this is required an automatic man. . . . The lot of the primary school teacher is not an enviable one. He is wretchedly paid, often with a coolie’s wage: he is closely circumscribed with government restrictions”<sup>48</sup>

This writer is of the opinion that "since Indian ministers have been responsible for education in the Provinces notable strides have been made." But he also realises that

"there must be a return, certainly in the primary stages, to education based upon Indian vernacular inspiration."

The new educational system which this article puts forward as an ideal "must take, as its pattern, the village school of the pre-British era." It is to be a system "in which is fostered the idea of the welfare of the panchyat." But it is precisely such a system which has become impossible under a centralised bureaucracy and will be equally unattainable under the new constitution. Nor is this an accident; for it is an integral aspect of the psychological basis of empire that the mass of the people should be ignorant and apathetic. And this principle, as we have already seen, applies equally to those who are governed and to the great majority of the "ruling race."

There is, of course, no lack of "uplift" work, in which both the Government and the missionaries participate. A book on the subject by a British official named Brayne, which has received considerable publicity, explains the necessity of conferring upon the villagers such benefits as window-boxes, knitting, football, rounders, lace-making, trousers, and books on beetles and butterflies which kind people can send from England. Mr. Brayne believes in teaching the villagers to sing "Home Sweet Home" and discourages the peasant women from the unseemly occupations of grinding corn and making dung-cakes for fuel.<sup>49</sup>

Not unnaturally such a programme received the official blessings of such high authorities as Sir Basil Blackett;<sup>50</sup> and Village Uplift became a popular sport. Mr. Verrier Elwin gives an entertaining account of the visit of an Uplift Committee, "their coming heralded by police invading our villages and beating a peasant to force him to prepare comforts for Uplift Committee members." A meeting was later addressed by the Uplifters "now well-fed with food taken free of charge from half-starving villagers," the speeches consisting entirely of superfluous advice and information.<sup>51</sup>

However, as Mr. Brayne admits, the villager "will not be persuaded by those whom he has not learnt to trust," and he remains fortunately deaf to the voice of Uplift. Missionaries "with their cars and big houses" impress him as little.<sup>52</sup> But while the hybrid culture of Anglo-India has had little attraction for the villager, his own culture has been effectively destroyed by our political and economic system. The prophetic words of Elphinstone have proved to be true "that we have dried up the fountains of native talent, and that from the nature of our conquest, not only all encouragement to the advancement of knowledge is withdrawn, but even the actual learning of the nation is likely to be lost and the productions of former genius to be forgotten."<sup>53</sup>

With ignorance prejudice is equally fostered. We have already observed how prejudice is cultivated between Hindu and Moslem to create and maintain disunion among the Indian people. The final concern of this chapter is with the operation of propaganda in Britain as a means of maintaining those illusions of "superiority" which divide the white from the coloured workers.<sup>54</sup>

The most popular illusion is, of course, the idea that British rule is earnestly desired by the people of India. So carefully is this cultivated that a friend of the present author who was broadcasting from Bombay found an expression of the profound loyalty of the people tagged on to the end of his address by the official censor of his manuscript. Sir Michael O'Dwyer would even have us believe that after the horrors of Jalianwala Bagh and the Crawling Order the people of Amritsar expressed their gratitude to him for the slaughter of their kinsmen and the honour of being made to crawl on their bellies. According to Sir Michael a deputation came to Government House expressly to inform him that the people in the city, who had formerly imagined the British soldiers were devils, had now "found them to be angels."<sup>55</sup> Pope Gregory himself was not more flattering than these grateful victims.

Next there is the general degradation of the Indian people. Miss Mayo, who had already done yeoman service to American imperialism by vilifying the Philippine

Islanders,<sup>56</sup> produced in *Mother India* a pornographic classic which has become almost a text-book of anti-Indian propaganda. The picture of India which such books give to the British public—and, indeed, to the world at large—is too well-known to need description here; but a few comments may serve to show how completely and with what malice that picture has distorted the facts.

The treatment of women in Hindu society provides probably the most fruitful field for Mayoesque propaganda. No rational person pretends that in this, or in any other aspect of Indian life, the present state of affairs is satisfactory. The charge against India's detractors is not that they have criticised, but that they have criticised untruthfully and unfairly; and this is immediately clear when the popular picture of the treatment of women in India is compared with the facts.

Sir Thomas Munro's opinion on this subject has already been quoted.<sup>57</sup> As far back as 1813 prejudice would appear to have made some headway, for Munro was asked at that time whether Hindu women were not slaves to their husbands—to which he very sensibly replied: "They have as much influence in their families as, I imagine, the women have in this country."<sup>58</sup> In our own time Mr. Brailsford has noted the "respect and affection" with which Hindu women are treated and the "sudden abandonment" of the *purdah* system in the North, where it has always been strongest.<sup>59</sup> During the Civil Disobedience Campaign women who had spent their whole lives in seclusion came out in thousands to walk unveiled in Congress processions.

Within the limited framework of the legislatures there has also been a movement that has received little acknowledgement. The Indian State of Travancore granted the franchise to women on equal terms with men in 1920. The following year the Legislative Council of Madras, at its first session, removed the sex disqualification with regard to the franchise. Bombay and Bengal followed this lead, the Punjab Council passing a similar measure without a division. In the United Provinces the resolution to extend the franchise to women was passed unanimously, whilst the same was the case in the Indian State of Mysore.<sup>60</sup> Until 1926 it was

impossible under the electoral rules laid down by the British Government for women to become Council members themselves; but as soon as this ban was removed the Provincial Council of Assam led the way in this fuller extension of the principle of sex equality. It was promptly followed by Bombay, Madras, the Punjab and the Central Provinces. The Legislative Assembly in 1922 passed by a large majority a resolution granting the franchise to women in all provinces where they were allowed to vote for the Provincial Councils, though sex disqualification will be restored to a large extent by the new Constitution, for which the Indian people are not in any way responsible.

The history of the Sarda Act affords further evidence that it is the Government which retards progress and Indian nationalism which demands reforms.<sup>61</sup> By this Act the marriage of girls below the age of fourteen or of boys below eighteen has been forbidden—no drastic measure to a Western mind, though it is important to remember that the age of maturity is much lower in India than in our own country.

Those who declaim most indignantly against child-marriage in India are generally careful to avoid all reference to the Sarda Act. The Act was at the outset opposed by the Government and its nominees in the Legislative Assembly so that its passage was considerably delayed.<sup>62</sup> "An abuse," wrote Mr. Horace Alexander in 1929, "which modern Turkey would have swept away in a single session is still allowed to linger on and fester."<sup>63</sup> Pressure, however, continued; and the Government, withdrawing its opposition became "icily neutral." Furthermore, when the Act was eventually passed, the Government, as the executive authority, became the guarantor of its ineffectiveness.<sup>64</sup>

Child-marriage itself, though highly undesirable, has been grossly misrepresented in this country; as for example in the implication frequently assumed in it that marriages are commonly consummated before puberty. It is doubtless possible to find many cases where this has occurred; but to represent these as typical is criminally false, just as it is a criminal libel to represent the leaders of modern India as supporters of such practices.<sup>65</sup> Whatever individual

cases may be produced in evidence of pre-puberty consummation of marriage, the very fact that the race has withstood the ravages of famine and disease is proof enough that the practice cannot be universal, for otherwise the national physique must have been utterly destroyed.<sup>66</sup> In the words of the 1901 Census Commissioners:

"No one who has watched the sturdy Jat women lift their heavy water jars at the village well is likely to have any misgivings as to the effect of their marriage system on the physique of the race."

Miss Mayo's neurotic fantasies, written for the entertainment of frustrated spinsters, concern us only in so far as Westerners have "licked their chops with satisfaction"<sup>67</sup> over her alleged findings. Among the popular Mayo myths it may be noted that

"the monstrous allegation that Hindu mothers commonly abuse their children is supported by not a shred of evidence."<sup>68</sup>

Miss Mayo is also responsible for the legend that boys are drafted into Hindu temples for the purpose of sodomy. Regarding these two allegations it may be remarked that the first (concerning Hindu mothers) is given on "the highest medical authority," who is apparently too shy to allow his name to appear. Regarding the second charge, Miss Mayo must either have been citing actual convictions or unconvinced cases of which she had knowledge; yet she neither quoted police records nor is it on record that she herself instigated police proceedings.

Without dwelling any further on this particular book we may usefully note its general technique, which is typical of similar propaganda. In the first place we have statements of fact and alleged quotations which are demonstrably false.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, particular instances, whether true or otherwise, are given an exaggerated significance by generalisation, and often by a deliberate suppression of other relevant facts. Thirdly, criticisms are made in a vicious spirit of racial hatred which has assured the book "of its place in the Pantheon of Hate."<sup>70</sup> Fourthly,



there is no recognition that a similar "drain inspection" of America or any country in Europe would reveal equally unpleasant material, for what it may be worth.<sup>71</sup> Fifthly, there is a complete evasion of the fact that, in so far as true instances are cited, they are in large measure a condemnation of the Government, which has kept the people in ignorance and done little itself, by way of legislation, to remove social evils; for the Government has generally been "neutral," or even hostile, in its attitude to social reform.<sup>72</sup> And finally there is a complete suppression of the fact that the demand for reform comes principally from the nationalist and socialist movements, which are powerless to effect any sweeping changes in the country until India is independent. Only in a free India will the psychological impetus for such reforms be found among the masses, or the power to implement reforms among their leaders.

An example of the social evils which are unlikely to outlive British rule is to be found in the opium traffic. On this subject Professor Durant in his book *The Case for India*<sup>73</sup> has stated the facts briefly and without exaggeration:

"Miss Mayo tells us that Hindu mothers feed opium to their children. . . . She does not tell us (though she must have known) that women drug their children because the mothers must abandon them every day to go to work in the factories. She does not tell us that the opium is grown only by the Government, and is sold exclusively by the Government; that its sale, like the sale of drink through saloons, is carried on despite the protest of the Nationalist Congress. . . . She does not tell us that Burma excluded opium by law until the British came, and is now overrun with it;<sup>74</sup> that the British distributed it free in Burma to create a demand for it; that whereas the traffic has been stopped in the Philippines, England has refused at one World Opium Conference after another to abandon it in India; that the Report of the Government Retrenchment Commission of 1925 emphasized 'the importance of safeguarding opium sales as an important source of revenue,' and recommended 'no further reduction': that when Gandhi, by a peaceful anti-opium campaign in Assam

had reduced the consumption of the drug there by one-half, the Government put a stop to his labours and gaoled fourty-four of his aides."

The forcing of the opium traffic on China in the interests of the British merchants in India has already been noted. The greatest Indian consumption of the drug is in Assam, where in 1921 a resolution was proposed in the Legislative Council that opium sales should be reduced by 10 per cent yearly. The resolution was carried by a large majority, in spite of the opposition of the Government nominees, the Europeans, and various Indian title-holders; but the Government refused to implement the decision. There is, indeed, probably no better example of a demand in which the political, social and religious leaders of Indian opinion have been united against the Government.<sup>75</sup>

Regarding the use of this drug a pitiful description was given in the New York *Nation*:

"The women who work in the mills of Calcutta and Bombay give their babies opium in the morning so that they will sleep all day . . . women in the villages who work in the fields dope their babies before they go out, so that they may not waken and cry in their mothers' absence."<sup>76</sup>

Referring to the efforts made in 1921 (during the Non-co-operation Movement) to reduce opium consumption, and the imprisonment of Gandhi's workers in Assam, Mr. Alexander wrote in 1929: "I am sorry to say, they are reluctant to repeat their experiment till they have some guarantee of better treatment. . . . As so often in India one is up against the abominations of the corrupt police system."<sup>77</sup>

Prostitution in India is another frequent subject of propaganda intended to create race-prejudice. Much use is made of the fact that *devadasis*, or prostitutes attached to the temples, are to be found in parts of Southern India. Little, however, is written regarding the growing opposition to this practice or the fact that it has already been legally abolished in some of the Indian States.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, a fact which will be entirely new to most English readers is that under Lord Roberts the British Army

organised prostitution in India for its own purposes. The following is an extract from the circular memorandum issued in the name of Roberts, as Commander-in-Chief, by Quarter-Master General Chapman and sent to every cantonment in India:

"In the regimental bazaars it is necessary to have a sufficient number of women, to take care that they are sufficiently attractive, to provide them with proper houses, and above all to insist upon means of ablution being always available. . . .

"If young soldiers are carefully advised in regard to the advantage of ablution, and recognise that convenient arrangements exist in the regimental bazaar (i.e. in the *chakla*, or brothel), they may be expected to avoid the risks involved in association with women who are not recognised (that is, licensed) by the regimental authorities."<sup>79</sup>

Dr. Walsh, who quotes this interesting circular, gives examples of how it was implemented locally. In one case an officer had sent a requisition to a magistrate "for extra attractive women for regimental bazaar, in accordance with Circular Memorandum 21a." Another complained that "there are not enough women; they are not attractive enough. More and younger women are required."<sup>80</sup>

The existence of this documentary evidence makes more serious the recent charge of Edmond Privat, a Swiss Professor and former substitute-delegate at the League of Nations, that "the only place where women were not safe in India was under the walls of British barracks." This statement, quoted by Sir Samuel Hoare (and indignantly denied by him as "a gross and outrageous charge" which it was not worth his while to answer) has in fact never been answered at all.<sup>81</sup> So deeply rooted is Anglo-Indian mythology in the present day that while the wildest stories of Indian degradation may be freely circulated and are as readily accepted, an accusation which is commonly believed in India to be true in substance,<sup>82</sup> when voiced by a distinguished European, can only be met by hysterical denunciations if the prestige of Empire is at stake.

# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Vol I, Preface, pp. xii-xiii. This is in the edition of 1858, as quoted throughout this book, and the date is significant. Bright in one of his speeches gives an amusing picture of the newly appointed Viceroy who "shuts himself up to study the first volume of Mr. Mill's *History of India*."

<sup>2</sup> Mill, as Wilson points out, was at pains to refute the opinions of the great Orientalist, Sir William Jones (1746-94) of whom the *Dictionary of National Biography* says that he "felt none of the contempt which his English contemporaries showed to the natives of India."

<sup>3</sup> See *The Briton in India* by Professor T. J. George (Madras, 1936) where the origin and growth of race prejudice is very thoroughly examined.

<sup>4</sup> *A Voyage to Suratt* in the year 1689 by J. Ovington, M.A., Chaplain to His Majesty. (London, 1696.)

<sup>5</sup> The opinions of Hastings, Heber, Elphinstone and Malcolm, also of Colonel Sleeman, will be found in Max Müller's *India, What Can it Teach Us?* (Lecture II, pp. 44-50, 60-61.) Müller shows that this high opinion of the Hindus, with particular reference to their honesty, was shared by many earlier writers such as Megasthenes and Marco Polo.

<sup>6</sup> Elphinstone himself explains this reference to the government in another paragraph (quoted by Müller, p. 61) in which he says that "deceit is most common in people connected with government, a class which spreads far in India, as, from the nature of the land revenue, the lowest villager is often obliged to resist force by fraud."

<sup>7</sup> Sir G. Campbell. Quoted by Müller (*op. cit.* p. 48: footnote). Sir John Shore was of the same opinion. Nevertheless Captain John Seely in *The Wonders of Elora* (London, 1824), noted the honesty of the Indian peasants.

<sup>8</sup> Elphinstone's *History of India*. Quoted by Max Müller (*op. cit.* p. 59). Compare Note to Chap. VIII.

<sup>9</sup> Müller (*op. cit.* pp. 42-43). The Abbé Dubois is also Miss Mayo's principal authority in *Mother India*, notwithstanding the fact that he wrote of India 130 years ago.

<sup>10</sup> Sir William Hunter in his *Brief History of the Indian Peoples* (23rd Edition, p. 88) quotes the authority of Megasthenes that in his time the Hindus scarcely ever had recourse to a law-suit.

<sup>11</sup> Mill, Vol I, p. 329. Wilson in a footnote denies the "litigious" character of the Hindus on the authority of Sir Thomas Munro. He points out that this supposition arises from "the imperfection of our own systems of finance and judicature," and that it is curious that Mill should sneer at the Hindus for not "taking the law into their own hands."

<sup>12</sup> Footnote to Mill's *History*, Vol I, p. 325.

<sup>13</sup> Mill, Vol I, p. 325: Wilson's footnote. He quotes a statement from the *Oriental Magazine* of March, 1826, that "The dread of an oath prevents men of credit from giving testimony at all, even to the loss of a just cause."

<sup>14</sup> "He represents the Hindus as such a monstrous mass of all vices that, as Colonel Vans Kennedy remarked, society could not have held

together if it had really consisted of such reprobates only." (Max Müller, *op. cit.* p. 44.)

<sup>15</sup> The present author found this to be the case in every part of India which he visited. One of Mill's authorities on Hindu inhospitality is Dr. Tennant, whose evidence Wilson dismisses as based on the purest ignorance. (Footnote to Vol I, p. 341.)

<sup>16</sup> Mill, Vol II, p. 28. This characteristic observation illustrates Lowes Dickinson's contention that "of all the Western nations, the English are the least capable of appreciating the qualities of Indian civilisation." (*Essay on the Civilizations of India, China and Japan.*)

<sup>17</sup> Elphinstone's *History of India* (Cowell's Edition) p. 213. The present position of the Church in India is illustrated in the case of Mr. Verrier Elwin. In 1932, when he was still a priest of the Church of England, he was refused a licence to preach unless he took the Oath of Allegiance. The Bishop of Nagpur in a letter dated Feb. 16th, 1932, told him that the duty of the clergy was "to fit people to do their duty as good citizens in that state of life into which it shall please God to call them."

<sup>18</sup> *The Times*, May 5th, 1932. It is significant that this meeting took place under the chairmanship of Lord Meston, a former ruler of India who takes an active part in anti-Indian political propaganda. Lord (then Sir Frederick) Lugard in praising missionary activity in Africa said that missions had done more perhaps, than any other agency for developing British possessions. "I put aside," he said, "the spiritual aspect of such work and am looking at its economic advantages to a State." (*The Extension of British Influence and Trade in Africa.* 1895.)

<sup>19</sup> The British "caste system" is described by Professor Durant in *The Case for India* (New York, 1930) mainly in relation to the Indian people. Mr. A. C. Brown in *An Ordinary Man's India* gives an excellent picture of the rigid subdivision of classes among the British themselves. E. M. Forster's classic, *A Passage to India*, though not documentary evidence, may be recommended as easily the best description of the absurdities of the whole system in action, as it affects both races.

<sup>20</sup> The Indian Civil Service: so-called, according to Indian opinion, because its members are not Indian, nor civil, nor servants, as a general rule.

<sup>21</sup> Sir Valentine Chirol in *India* (p. 381). Edwin Montagu brings out this fact in his *Indian Diary*, which describes his tour of India as Secretary of State.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters of Queen Victoria*, London, 1932. Of the general treatment of Indians by individual Englishmen Sir Henry Cotton gives some telling examples in *New India* (pp. 69-70). Similar evidence is to be found in Nevins's *New Spirit In India* (p. 117) and G. F. Abbott's *Through India with the Prince*. Keir Hardie in his book, *India*, gave further examples of "insults, abuse and contumely," and said that he "could fill a decent sized volume" with similar stories. Quotations are given from all these witnesses, and others, in Dr. Sunderland's *India in Bondage* (Chap. VII). Such incidents as they describe are less common to-day, not because the English mental attitude has changed, but because Indians are less submissive.

<sup>23</sup> *In India* by G. W. Steevens, London, 1899 (pp. 338 and 366). Dr. Josiah Oldfield pointed out in an article many years ago that "in

the time of the old East India Company, India was more harshly though more happily governed." (*New Age*, March, 1908.) He considered that British officials thanks to "steamboats and cheap postage" were dependent on India for nothing but "sport and salary," and that this undermined any cultural sympathy.

<sup>24</sup> Compare *Studies of Indian Life and Sentiment*, by Sir Bampfylde Fuller (who made very similar criticisms) and Fielding Hall's *The Passing of Empire*.

<sup>25</sup> In *India*, p. 366. Brailsford in *Rebel India* (p. 46) records the amused astonishment of Indian villagers in the United Provinces on meeting an Englishman who was interested in what they had to eat. The villagers told him that the *Sahibs* only asked them about crime.

<sup>26</sup> *Must Britain Lose India?* by Lt.-Colonel Arthur Osburn, D.S.O. (London, 1930). That the "Tommies" are not above reproach is shown by the Penda case (mentioned on page 328, note <sup>125</sup>) also by the behaviour of thirty or forty men of the Wiltshire Regiment, who on Dec. 24th and 25th, 1936, wrecked a club at Bangalore and looted shops and restaurants. A very brief report of this appeared in some British papers on Dec. 28th, 1936.

<sup>27</sup> Burke's famous speeches on India were made, of course, before the French Revolution, after which his intellect was employed in the service of reaction.

<sup>28</sup> Macaulay's speech on July 10th, 1833. Macaulay praised Burke's sympathetic insight, but did not imitate it. See his *Essay on Clive*, where he refers to Indians as "men destitute of what in Europe is called honour" and proceeds to accuse the whole race of every conceivable crime.

<sup>29</sup> Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*. The indifference of Parliament was more recently explained by a Conservative member of the House (Mr. Macquisten) when his party was accused of a lack of interest in the Empire. He said that "when shareholders fail to turn up at a meeting it indicates approval of the policy being pursued." *Manchester Guardian*, July 13th, 1934.

<sup>30</sup> *Government in India Under a Bureaucracy*, London 1853.

<sup>31</sup> An Oxford Don, quoted by Thompson in his *History of India*. He also quoted *The Times* (Feb. 25th, 1892), as saying that "Indian history has never been made interesting to English readers except by rhetoric." Henry Fawcett once complained that "a broken head on Cold-Bath Fields produces a greater sensation amongst us than three pitched battles in India."

<sup>32</sup> *History of India*, p. 75. The fullest use is made of the education system for anti-nationalist propaganda, as, for example, in the United Provinces, where the Publicity Officer in 1932 offered prizes for the best essays in condemnation of the National Congress.

<sup>33</sup> Letter by John M. Douglas, a member of the Society of Friends and former headmaster of a Mission School in the Central Provinces (*The Friend*, October 30th, 1931). How complete was the boycott of the Prince's visit is shown by contemporary press cuttings. In Calcutta, for example, according to the *London Times* of November 30th, 1921, "the streets were silent, dark and deserted. It was like a city of the dead."

<sup>34</sup> Even J. R. Seeley in his *Expansion of England* expressed his doubt

as to whether British rule over the Indian people was not "sinking them lower in misery." It was his view that "subjection for a long time to a foreign yoke is one of the most potent causes of national deterioration." Ramsay MacDonald expressed a similar view in *The Awakening of India*.

<sup>35</sup> Speech to Douglas Rotary Club, as reported in *The Listener*, Dec. 30th, 1931.

<sup>36</sup> Macaulay's evidence before the Parliamentary Commission of 1853. In the words of Sir William Hunter, "the conquest of the land was followed by the conquest of the mind."

<sup>37</sup> It may be noted that even Macaulay's programme was progressive by comparison with that of the East India Company before his time. Speaking in the House on June 3rd, 1853, John Bright mentioned the dissatisfaction of the Court of Directors when four Indian students came to London to study medicine.

<sup>38</sup> In the Civil Service examinations Indians must, of course, compete with Englishmen in their knowledge of the English language, English literature and English history.

<sup>39</sup> *Rebel India*, by H. N. Brailsford, p. 107. Indian history in the text books means the Delhi Durbar and the achievements of the British rulers.

<sup>40</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, p. 51. How this policy of emasculation is systematically carried out has been demonstrated by Sir Henry Cotton in *Indian and Home Memories*. Mrs. Besant has analysed it with special reference to education in *India: Bond or Free?*

<sup>41</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, p. 195.

<sup>42</sup> In February, 1934, the Forest Department even issued an order under Section 26 (2) (a) of the Indian Forest Act warning Mr. Elwin against so much as entering any forest village without written permission. This was done in full knowledge of the fact that his work was confined to educational and medical services.

<sup>43</sup> The Simon Report went so far as to comment on the "notable improvement that has attended the well-directed efforts in individual Provinces like the Punjab."

<sup>44</sup> Another insuperable obstacle under the present régime is the fact that for eighty years the medium of instruction in schools has been English. Until this system can be radically changed real popular education is an impossibility.

<sup>45</sup> This shortage of money did not prevent the Government, which retained control of European education, from spending annually in Bengal over £7 for every European student in contrast with 4s. 6d. spent annually on each Indian student.

<sup>46</sup> 1931 Census, Part I, p. 334-5. The Simon Report will be more accessible to the average reader and will be found to contain interesting comparative figures, including those which illustrate the relative backwardness of British India (already mentioned) as compared with Travancore, Cochin and Baroda. (See Simon Report, Vol I, p. 382.) Mr. Brailsford in *Rebel India* (p. 98) mentions the contrast of Calcutta, which succeeded under its socialist Mayor (Mr. Subhas Bose) in educating 60 per cent of the children in the municipality "in spite of dire poverty, without compulsory powers."

<sup>47</sup> These are, of course, Buddhist monasteries, the native education system having been less interfered with in Burma than in India owing to its different character and the more recent conquest of the country.

<sup>48</sup> "India's Return to Pre-British Standards," by W. E. Lucas (*Great Britain and the East*, Oct. 22nd, 1936).

<sup>49</sup> *Uplift in the Indian Village*. The book was published in England under the title *The Remaking of Village India*. Sir Malcolm Hailey, in a preface to this book, points out that "there were many who, not unreasonably, feared the result of preaching to the villager that discontent with his own conditions of life. . . ." But there is nothing in the book itself to arouse such apprehensions.

<sup>50</sup> Finance Member of the Indian Government from 1922-1928.

<sup>51</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, pp. 146-7.

<sup>52</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, p. 171. The present author found the same general impression of missionaries, due mainly to their relatively luxurious standard of living as compared with the Indian average. Alexander, in *The Indian Ferment* (p. 188) records the mirth of an Indian class of students on learning that a Christian "fast" meant eating fish instead of meat.

<sup>53</sup> Forrest's *Selections from the Minutes and Other Official Writings of the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone*. (1884), p. 102.

<sup>54</sup> The present author discovered, as many others must have done, that one's first voyage to India is made the occasion for every effort to create prejudice in the new-comer's mind. He must indeed have a clear head if he is not to reach Bombay with his mind already made up by the incessant anti-Indian propaganda to which he has been subjected on the voyage.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to *The Times*, May 2nd, 1932. O'Dwyer was Governor of the Punjab at the time of the massacre. He concludes most modestly that "the British soldier would probably blush at this description"—forgetful no doubt that there were also angels at Mons.

<sup>56</sup> *The Isles of Fear*, by Kathleen Mayo. Another American contributor to this series is Mrs. Patricia Kendal, whose book *Come with me to India* was also greeted with much approval by the Anglo-Indian community.

<sup>57</sup> See Chapter VIII, p. 144.

<sup>58</sup> *Minutes of Evidence, &c. on the Affairs of the East India Company* (1813).

<sup>59</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 74. *Purdah* (the veiling and seclusion of women) has suffered a formidable blow owing to the deliberate policy, as well as the practical necessities, of the nationalist movement. (See Chapter X.)

<sup>60</sup> Under the Montagu-Chelmsford Constitution, which came into operation at this time, Provincial Legislative Councils were to be elected by a male electorate, but the Councils were empowered to remove the sex disqualification themselves.

<sup>61</sup> This Act has sometimes been claimed as a "result" of Miss Mayo's propaganda. It is therefore important to note that it was preceded by years of agitation which began before Miss Mayo's name was even known in India, and that similar acts had been passed in the Indian states of Baroda, Mysore and Indore before her book was written.



<sup>62</sup> The Government actually drafted an alternative bill reducing the age limit for girls to twelve and providing for conscientious objectors. All Government nominees with one exception voted against the Sarda Act in 1927.

<sup>63</sup> *The Indian Ferment*, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Brailsford in *Rebel India* (p. 77). He quotes the case of a Punjab notable who was convicted under the Sarda Act and promptly pardoned by the Government. "After that," remarks Brailsford, "the Act became virtually a dead letter."

<sup>65</sup> Miss Mayo in *Mother India* quoted both Gandhi and Tagore—the former from an "interview" which he repudiated and the latter from his writings. In the case of Tagore, Miss Mayo removed two words in such a way as to attribute views to the Indian poet which he had never expressed as his own, and so identified him with opinions which he had opposed for a lifetime. Other "witnesses," both English and Indian, repudiated statements attributed to them in *Mother India*. These included the Principal of Victoria College, Lahore.

<sup>66</sup> It should be noted that child-marriages were common to ancient Greece and Rome, also to seventeenth century England, without "degeneracy" resulting from them. Sir Denzil Ibbotson in a letter to *The Leader* (Allahabad, Sept. 19th, 1927) gives the normal period between "gift-marriage" and consummation as three to nine years.

<sup>67</sup> *The Indian Ferment*, p. 242. The *New Statesman*, as quoted on the dust-cover of *Mother India*, stated that it "makes the claim for Swaraj seem nonsense and the will to grant it almost a crime."

<sup>68</sup> *The Indian Ferment*, p. 191. That Britain has even more vigorous allies than Miss Mayo is shown by a statement issued to the Associated Press (April 13th, 1933), by Rabindranath Tagore. Dr. Tagore quoted a well-known Argentine paper which had published a photograph of a Parsee "Tower of Silence," with a note explaining that in such towers the living bodies of heretics were offered to kites and vultures. The British, said this paper, were trying to suppress this practice.

<sup>69</sup> "Some of the things which Miss Mayo pretends to have seen at Kalighat could not have been seen by any Westerner." (*The Indian Ferment*, p. 70.) Nor are they typical, as numerous writers have pointed out, even if the descriptions are correct.

<sup>70</sup> Wyndham Lewis in *The Enemy*.

<sup>71</sup> Indian writers not unnaturally adopted this method of reply in some cases, and Miss Mayo's book was followed by lurid Indian publications on the less reputable aspects of American life. The picture of any country in the world which can be pieced together from hospital records, police-court news and the gossip of the brothels is indeed astonishing.

<sup>72</sup> The reader may be interested to note as a literary curiosity the record of a speech made by Lady Cynthia Mosley on Nov. 29th, 1927, with regard to *Mother India*. Lady Cynthia took the view that "even if all the things in this book are true, that is all the greater argument for Indian Home Rule." She referred indignantly to the British opposition to the Sarda Act and to the suppression by *The Times* of a letter of protest signed by ten prominent Indians. (Special supplement to *The Indian*, December, 1927.) The reader is recommended to Mr. Ernest Wood's book *An Englishman defends Mother India* for a further

study of this particular source of misinformation. There are also a number of Indian replies to Miss Mayo (most of them published in India) and in fairness to the missionaries it should be noted that the National Christian Council of India publicly repudiated her picture of the country as "untrue to the facts and unjust to the people of India."

<sup>73</sup> *The Case for India* (New York, 1930).

<sup>74</sup> Evidence regarding Burma is quoted by Dr. Sunderland (*India in Bondage*, p. 155). The evidence given here regarding the use of opium may be compared with that cited by Marx in *Capital* (Everyman edition, p. 424), regarding its use in Britain in the nineteenth century. He quotes medical evidence regarding the drugging of children with opiates in both industrial and agricultural areas. The causes were the same in both countries.

<sup>75</sup> The *Brahmo-Samaj* and the *Arya-Samaj* have both declared for abolition and the Nationalist press has associated itself wholeheartedly with the demand of the Geneva Opium Conference for a limitation of opium production to medicinal needs.

<sup>76</sup> Letter by Gertrude Marvin Williams, dated Calcutta July 2nd, 1925. Similar statements were made by Mr. C. F. Andrews (*Modern Review*, Calcutta, June, 1925), who described these babies "with their shrunk, old, wizened faces, lying drugged with opium on the floors of the wretched hovels of Bombay."

<sup>77</sup> *The Indian Ferment*, p. 87. Mr. Horace Alexander is an authority of international repute on the subject of opium.

<sup>78</sup> The most recent example was the Indian State of Cochin, where "temple prostitution" was abolished by law in 1931.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted by Dr. Walter Walsh in *The Moral Damage of War* (Boston, 1906) pp. 151-152. Dr. Walsh quotes also from the *New Age* of Nov. 27th, 1902, an account given by Lord George Hamilton regarding an Indian who was murdered by two men of the Ninth Lancers "because he failed to find native women for them." (*Moral Damage of War*, p. 162.)

<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note here that syphilis is known in India as *Feringhee* or "European" disease, and according to medical evidence quoted by Dr. Sunderland (*India in Bondage*, p. 388) was introduced from Europe. Mr. Havelock Ellis (*Sex in Relation to Society*, p. 327) shows that venereal disease "is ten times more frequent among the British troops than among the native troops."

<sup>81</sup> Hoare's speech in the House of Commons as Secretary of State for India; reported in *The Times* (April 30th, 1932). Hoare at the same time made an attack upon the *Friends of India* (an organisation of which the present author was at that time an honorary official) accusing this organisation also of "gross and outrageous charges," which he did not specify. Though challenged in the *Manchester Guardian* (May 2nd, 1932) to prove a single inaccuracy, Sir Samuel did not reply.

<sup>82</sup> Such was the experience of the present author, also of Dr. Sunderland, who states in his book *India in Bondage* that "In my own travels in India I found that all communities in or near which soldiers were stationed, particularly foreign (British) soldiers, regarded their presence as a danger to their women, and always felt greatly relieved when the soldiers were ordered away."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE BRIGHTEST JEWEL

THERE is a true story of India that is also a parable of British rule. It is to be found in the history of the Sal forests of the Gangetic Plain.

For fifty years British forestry experts protected these forests from fire, and it was only a few years ago that they made an interesting discovery. It appeared that, after all, these Sal forests, unlike resinous forests, required an occasional fire to stimulate their growth. Fire destroys the undergrowth, leaving an ash which forms an alkaline mould and makes good soil for the young saplings.

Fifty years of protection produced a thick undergrowth, damp and heavy in the rainy season. It kept the light from the young shoots and covered them with a poisonous acid mould which killed them. Such shoots as survived were eaten by deer, which multiplied under British forestry laws. For while deer were protected by law, white sahibs on *safari* had greatly reduced the number of tigers which (regardless of law) might otherwise have kept down the number of deer.

A few years before, the protection of India's forests had been considered indisputable evidence of the success of British administration in this sphere. By 1930, though it was not (and will not be) publicly admitted, the experts knew that British efficiency had been misplaced. They were humbly learning from a natural, unprotected forest how sal regenerates itself when freed from interference.<sup>1</sup>

Life and property are not dearer to us than our illusions, when self-esteem depends upon them. The British still believe that they brought irrigation to India. The simple fact, proved by Sir William Willcocks, is that the canals built 3,000 years ago by the rulers of Bengal have fallen into disuse and disrepair under British rule. What was

achieved a thousand years before Christ the British Government, with all the devices of modern engineering at its disposal, had not even the interest to maintain.<sup>2</sup>

In more recent years, it is true, the necessity for encouraging cotton crops and the possibilities of irrigation as a profitable investment have led to the construction of canals in many parts of the country; and Bengal may yet be favoured with the attentions of those who have discovered a new field for the employment of surplus capital. It has also been realised that the control of canal water is a powerful political weapon with which to menace seditious peasants.<sup>3</sup>

But until these discoveries were made nothing was done. The East India Company in its early years neither repaired canals itself nor permitted the people to do so. Dutt has demonstrated in his *Economic History of British India* that throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century the canals which are the arteries of Indian agriculture were continually neglected in favour of railway construction, because the latter suited the economic interests of Britain at the time.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, when irrigation works were seriously undertaken, the land revenue was augmented so heavily that in many parts of the country the peasant gained nothing from a profit that was shared by the Government, the banks, the British contractors and their employees.<sup>5</sup>

The point of main importance is that imperialism has brought no benefit to India which a free country (using, if necessary, such foreign technical assistance as Russia has employed) could not have developed for itself. Indeed, it was said of the greatest pioneer of irrigation under British rule that:

“Sir Arthur Cotton is merely an imitator, on a grand scale and with considerable personal genius, of the ancient Native Indian engineers.”<sup>6</sup>

Sir Arthur Cotton himself, who would not have disputed this statement, made it clear that in his opinion the irrigation schemes which he desired to press upon the Govern-

ment were held back because canal traffic would compete with the railways in which British capital was interested.<sup>7</sup> As in the case of Ceylon, the British Government was only slowly driven by force of necessity to revert to a system which it had too long neglected.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the railways themselves, it may be remarked that, in addition to the appalling exploitation involved in the guarantee system, the lack of any popular supervision of their construction has led to extensive damage. Sir William Willcocks, in his lectures at Calcutta University, showed that railway embankments have been allowed to cut across the natural drainage system of the country, acting as a dam during the heavy rains and vastly increasing the damage of floods in the low-lying districts.<sup>9</sup> Willcocks and other authorities have attributed the silting up of the Ganges delta as much to the method of railway construction as to general neglect by the Government.

Meanwhile in vast areas "all that the people know of the Government is that it takes away their money. . . . It gives them no roads, no irrigation, no medical aid—nothing; and its officials are the only thieves in the district."<sup>10</sup> The trade figures often quoted to prove the growing prosperity of such people are completely irrelevant. The profits of trade are shared between British and Indian capitalists. The food grains which the country sends abroad bring no profit to the cultivator, who must sell them to pay the Government, the landlord and the usurer, while he himself may live on the carcasses of rats or die of starvation.<sup>11</sup> India's "favourable balance of trade" means simply that "Home Charges" (including debts) and interest on foreign investments are paid by a surplus of exports over imports. If this still leaves a margin, made up by imports of bullion, the peasant is still no richer for the fact. The bullion imports of the past have represented partly re-investment and partly the hoarding of India's feudal aristocracy, which exchanges for gold the produce which it wrings from the peasantry.<sup>12</sup>

Trade is, in fact, simply a charge on the movement of commodities; and an export of agricultural produce from a starving country in payment of interest on unprofitable

debts or in exchange for the bullion hoarded by princes and landlords is not a gain but a dead loss to the Indian masses. Regarding the history of imports enough has already been said.<sup>13</sup>

Equally invalid is the attempted explanation of Indian poverty by Census figures. It is true that the last ten years have shown a considerable increase in the population, though this has been less rapid in British India than it has been in the Indian States. But this increase does not account for the growth of poverty up to 1921.<sup>14</sup> Until that time much of the apparent increase was due to annexation of territory, and an examination of figures per square mile yields surprising results. Actually, though the population per square mile increased by 6.5 per cent between 1871 and 1891, it fell in 1901 to 97.6 per cent of the 1871 figure, and by 1921 was only 105.1 per cent of that figure—showing an increase of 5.1 per cent in fifty years. Even France, where the population figures are considered "stationary," increased by 5.7 per cent during this same period, while England and Wales increased by 66.8 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

The net increase of population between 1871 and 1921 was actually less than 54 millions;<sup>16</sup> that is to say about 25 per cent in 50 years, during which period the population of Europe increased by 47 per cent. The discrepancy between this 25 per cent increase and the percentages given above for population per square mile is due to the fact that the new areas included after 1871 were less thickly populated than the rest of British India. Both methods of calculation, however, show that India increased its population (up to 1921) less rapidly than Europe.

The reason is simple enough. Comparing the Birth and Death Rate figures for British India with those of England and Wales from 1910 to 1914, we find that the average Indian Birth Rate was 39.4, the Death Rate 30.8, and the resulting Survival Rate 8.6. On the other hand, the British Birth Rate averaged 24.2, the Death Rate only 13.7, the Survival Rate being 10.5.<sup>17</sup>

Even to-day India is not overpopulated. The density of her population is considerably less than half that of

Britain or Belgium;<sup>18</sup> but the destruction of Indian industries threw an increasing burden upon agriculture up to the year 1921.<sup>19</sup> Uncultivated land there still is, much of it the property of princes and big landlords, whilst the Government itself keeps 13 per cent of the land for forestry purposes. About a fifth of the area under cultivation is irrigated, according to official statistics, but less than half of the irrigation works are due to State enterprise. Private enterprise in irrigation is meanwhile hindered by the taxation of wells.

Writing in 1916, Mr. P. K. Wattal, of the Indian Finance Department, drew attention to several features in which India compared very unfavourably with Europe. He noted that there was a smaller natural increase, in spite of a higher birth-rate, and a smaller average expectation of life with a steady downward tendency.<sup>20</sup> The increase of population is now less rapid in some of the European countries,<sup>21</sup> whilst that of India has become more rapid. But the causes of poverty cannot be found in the increase of the past decade in view of the fact that poverty was already growing before that time. We must also recognise that there would still be room for a further expansion of population in India if the resources of the country were properly developed and the wealth equitably distributed.

The Government's official publication *India in 1929-30* spoke of poverty as "the most characteristic feature of the rural classes of India." According to this authority:

"A large proportion of the inhabitants of India are still beset with poverty of a kind which finds no parallel in Western lands, and are living on the very margin of subsistence."<sup>22</sup>

This poverty is the result of 150 years of extortion. It began in Bengal with the robberies described in the early chapters of this book and a steady rise in the land tax assessment to double or treble the amount exacted by the Indian rulers.<sup>23</sup> It progressed with the policy of annexation, whereby the revenues of Indian States were plundered on the pretext of defence.<sup>24</sup> It was systematised in some

of the Provinces by the creation of an Indian land-owning class, which by the year 1900 was paying only 28 per cent of its rents to the Government and keeping the rest of the plunder as a reward for its loyalty.<sup>25</sup>

In the *ryotwari* provinces a standard levy of 45 per cent to 50 per cent on the gross produce of the peasant, and in some cases of a revenue assessment actually exceeding the gross produce,<sup>26</sup> drove the helpless villagers into permanent indebtedness.<sup>27</sup> As the Whitley Report remarks, "the influence of the economic thought in the nineteenth century led to the removal of all legal restrictions on usurious practices in India."<sup>28</sup> The result in the present day can be measured by the aggregate of £692,376,920 in rural indebtedness, as recently computed by the Indian Central Banking Enquiry.

In the nineteenth century famine proved an increasing menace, not because of any universal shortage of food, but because of this growing poverty and the consequent inability of the peasants to purchase in time of local scarcity. This was admitted by the Famine Commission of 1898 with regard to the famine in the previous year. While the "Greek gift" of railways proved a costly burden, one-ninth of the sum spent upon them was spent on works of irrigation up to 1900.<sup>29</sup> What little good the Government did for the people could hardly have been avoided in its own interests: the rest of its activities were organised forms of plunder. Even its system of justice was described by Sir Henry Strachey as a "horrid system," worse than the crimes it sought to suppress in its "shocking cruelty."<sup>30</sup>

"India had been populous and flourishing, the people thriving and happy," wrote Horace Wilson of the conditions "for centuries prior to the introduction of European agency."<sup>31</sup> Unlike previous conquerors, the British, till force of circumstances compelled them to make terms with the reactionary elements of Indian society, excluded the conquered people from all positions of responsibility.

"There is probably," wrote Holt Mackenzie, "no example of a Government carrying the principles of absolutism so completely through the civil administration



of the country, if that can be called civil which is in spirit so military.”<sup>32</sup>

Under such a system, embryonic of modern fascism, Indians were for years “excluded from every honour, dignity or office which the lowest Englishman could be prevailed upon to accept.”<sup>33</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century the villagers, powerless to protect themselves either from the Government or the native parasites whom it shielded, were paralysed with poverty. The results of an enquiry made in 1888 by the Government were so frightful that the authorities kept them secret;<sup>34</sup> but we have the authority of Sir William Hunter that in his time forty millions passed through life with only one meal a day.<sup>35</sup> Another eminent official stated that half of the agricultural population did not get a square meal during the whole course of the year, the standard of “squareness” being the food supplied in the Indian prisons.<sup>36</sup>

It was Sir William Hunter’s opinion that the Government assessment did not leave the cultivator enough food to support himself and his family throughout the year. “It profits little,” he said, enumerating what seemed to him the blessings of British Rule, “if the people have not enough to eat, and if the country cannot support the cost of our rule.”<sup>37</sup>

Henry George realised that “the real cause of want in India has been, and yet is, the rapacity of man, not the niggardliness of Nature.” Sir Daniel Hamilton explained this fact bluntly:

“The World takes the surplus crops, the *sowcar* and the trader take the money and the devil takes the people.”<sup>38</sup>

Taxation falls most heavily upon the poorest classes, a fact which was justified by Sir John Strachey on the grounds that they needed most famine relief, to which they should therefore contribute most substantially.<sup>39</sup> Even the Simon Report recommended a steeper gradient in the Income Tax; and it is interesting to note that the proposal was severely criticised by one of the Government’s Indian allies, who found it:

"politically dangerous, as it would throw the *zemindars* and propertied classes into the arms of the *sansculottes*, who are at the bottom of the present troubles."<sup>40</sup>

Taxation is, in fact, estimated to be higher to-day (even allowing for the fall in the value of the rupee) than it was under Aurungzib,<sup>41</sup> and annually about 30 per cent of the revenue goes to England in payment of "Home Charges" and interest on the National Debt. Nor does this percentage include the savings of British officials. Much of the revenue under the Mughals had come from the forfeiture of the estates of deceased grandees—a 100 per cent Death Duty. "Every man's Title and Estate," wrote Ovington, "are as mortal as himself, die with him, and return to the disposal of the Sovereign."<sup>42</sup> But in modern India the grandees are secure: the landlord is exempt from income tax and it is the poor peasant who bears the growing burden of taxation.

"There is no expectation," wrote the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in 1933, "of any reduction in India's heavy taxation, which is rapidly approaching Britain's high standard, if one can judge from the rate of increases in the last few years."<sup>43</sup>

In considering the incidence of taxation it is important to note that, on the vast sums paid annually as interest on loans raised in London, no Income Tax whatsoever is paid in India. By raising loans in London the Government adds materially to the resources of the British Exchequer at the cost of the Indian taxpayer. Income Tax on the Sterling Debt is paid at this end as a British tax on British dividends; and India, by losing this tax, pays virtually a higher rate of interest than the current rates would justify for every pound borrowed in London.<sup>44</sup>

Hyndman in his *Bankruptcy of India* showed how the avarice of the Government<sup>45</sup> was in his time leading to the deterioration of agriculture. Since fallow and cultivated land were taxed at the same rate, the peasants could give no rest to their fields, which were overworked. Crops that exhausted the soil were already being grown because these alone enabled the peasant to pay the Government, the

landlord and the usurer. And the destruction of the *panchayat* system, his last remaining protection against usury, was rapidly driving the peasant to destitution.

The appalling poverty of India in the present century has been recorded by such observers as Dr. Josiah Oldfield<sup>46</sup> and Professor Gilbert Slater, who estimated the average income per head in 1925 as about 4½d. a day.<sup>47</sup> This average was inclusive of rich and poor alike, so that the average for the peasant was even lower. In one case Slater records that a detailed examination of a Madras pariah settlement showed an average of only 2½d. per head per day "which means a halfpenny a day in addition to a bare sufficiency of rice." In another case the average proved to be only one penny, which Mr. Elwin recently estimated to be the average among the Gonds. In a Gond market he could not even change a rupee.

Lord Curzon's estimate of the average income in 1901 was £2 per head per year; and the Simon Report, in quoting it, stated that £8 represented the most optimistic estimate in 1922, when retail prices were over 100 per cent higher.<sup>48</sup> Another authority, writing of Bengal, stated that the peasants were living in 1927 on a diet "on which even rats could not live for more than five weeks."<sup>49</sup> Nothing could be more absurd than to assume that people living in such conditions are progressing materially because an increasing quantity of luxury goods from the West is imported for the use of capitalists and absentee landlords in the towns.

Sir Alfred Chatterton stated in 1930 that

"70 per cent to 80 per cent of the population are still living on almost the margin of subsistence."<sup>50</sup>

That this poverty is not due to the incompetence of the cultivators has been abundantly proved since Dr. Voelcker's time.<sup>51</sup> Even in the Punjab, where irrigation is most extensive and the people are considered relatively prosperous, the net income of the peasant was estimated recently to average 27s. per annum.<sup>52</sup> In the poorest parts of the country the people live so sparsely that the

Government is at a loss to know what to tax. Consequently the villagers living in Central India, under the administration of the Forestry Department, have their buffaloes taxed while there is also a tax on the white mud they use to keep their huts clean and the leaves they use for want of plates.

The world depression fell upon India "with the fury of a tropical tornado. The peasant saw the value of his crops tumbling from one harvest to another, to one-half or a third. . . . The village was ruined. . . . Its crops would fetch barely half the wonted price. But its debts, its taxes and its rents stood stolidly at the old figure."<sup>53</sup> Mr. Brailsford estimates that the general fall in prices increased India's indebtedness to Britain by one-third. Tax adjustments followed in some areas—tardy and utterly inadequate. By 1935 the *Manchester Guardian* found the income of the Indian peasantry "barely credible" and stated that

"The figures for a typical group of farmers in the Punjab show that the average net income per man fell from about ninepence a day in 1928-29 to about three-farthings a day in 1930-31."<sup>54</sup>

According to Professor P. G. Thomas of the University of Madras the one thing that saved the Indian peasant during the slump was his own sound instinct in preferring food crops to "money" crops. "The Indian peasant," according to Professor Thomas, "even at the best of times lives on the verge of poverty; and most of the economic surplus from agriculture goes into the pockets of the landlord, money-lender or Government. The depression has increased the inequalities of distribution between these partners in the agricultural business. The shares of the Government, the landlord and the money-lender are fixed, and thus the risks have largely fallen on the peasant, who is the least capable of bearing them."<sup>55</sup>

The story of Indian industrial labour is no less terrible, though as yet industrial conditions affect only a small proportion of the population.<sup>56</sup> These conditions have been made known in Britain through the Whitley Report,

and can be studied in a more readable presentation in the work of Margaret Read.<sup>57</sup> The Report of the Whitley Commission showed that 97 per cent of the working class in Bombay were housed "in one-roomed tenements with as many as six to nine persons living in one room." The same applied to one-third of the population at Karachi and 73 per cent of the working class at Ahmedabad.<sup>58</sup> The Commissioners concluded that "nearly all the workers live in single rooms." The Whitley Report noted the absence of latrines in these workers' houses, many of the hovels being also without windows or adequate ventilation. Mr. Brailsford tells us of two rows of workers' tenements in Ahmedabad, served by a single tap on which "seven hundred human bodies depended for the water of life."<sup>59</sup>

Housing conditions in Bombay City, according to *The Times*, are "reminiscent of the Black Hole of historical memory."<sup>60</sup> Among the slums of this city are those owned by the Bombay Improvement Trust, "an immensely wealthy semi-official corporation, run by Englishmen."<sup>61</sup>

"Poverty more shameless, more naked, more undisguised than in any city I have ever visited in any part of the world," was Miss Monica Whateley's description of conditions in the Indian cities. Yet those conditions, as Miss Whateley remarks, exist side by side with "all the appearances of wealth and prosperity that we can see in any European city."<sup>62</sup> While the death rate in Benares Cantonment, where the White Sahibs lived in luxury, stood at 12.3, the rate in the native town of Benares was 46.1.<sup>63</sup>

The Whitley Report states that the rate of infantile mortality, averaging between 200 and 250 per 1,000 births for the general population of India, reached 298 per 1,000 in Bombay during the year 1929, and that

"recent reports on the health conditions of Madras and Rangoon give rates of 300 to 350 per 1,000 for certain parts of these cities."<sup>64</sup>

Maternal mortality is also unusually high, averaging 24.5 per 1,000, and reaching the figure of 50 per 1,000 in Bengal, as compared with 4.06 for England and Wales in 1932.<sup>65</sup> In view of these figures it is interesting to note

that in Madras the Legislative Council has, so far without effect, asked the Government to open birth control clinics. Such clinics were opened in the Indian State of Mysore in 1930.

According to the Whitley Report, no less than two thirds of the families and individuals in industrial centres are in debt, the amount of these debts in the great majority of cases exceeding three months' wages. The relative inefficiency of Indian labour is generally acknowledged to be due mainly to under-nourishment, bad housing, and the ill-health resulting from general industrial conditions; whilst lack of education bears part of the responsibility.<sup>66</sup> Both the indebtedness of the industrial workers and the prevalence of preventable diseases may be attributed principally to the low wages paid in Indian industries.

Wages in the towns are admittedly higher as a general rule than they are in agriculture, but the cost of living is proportionately greater. As the Whitley Report tells us:

"Few industrial workers would remain in industry if they could secure sufficient food and clothing in the village; they are pushed, not pulled into the city."

The inadequacy of factory legislation has already been noted.<sup>67</sup> The Whitley Report speaks of workers "as young as five years of age" who toil "without adequate meal intervals or weekly rest days, and often for ten or twelve hours daily for sums as low as two annas"; that is to say, for about twopence a day.<sup>68</sup>

According to the Whitley Commissioners "the vast majority of workers in India do not receive more than about a 1s. a day." They estimated that in Bengal "which includes the large mass of industrial workers," 60 per cent earned not more than 1s. 2d. daily, "scaling down as low as 7d. to 9d. for men and 3d. to 7d. in the case of children and women, the working day averaging ten hours."

It is hardly necessary to point out that a Royal Commission under the Chairmanship of the ex-Speaker of the House of Commons is unlikely to have overstated the case in this terrible indictment. Unemployment has also followed with all the other evils that arise from capitalist

industrialisation. Meanwhile the fall in the consumption of cotton goods from 13½ yards per head in 1913-14 to 9½ yards per head in 1930-31 is the surest indication of increasing poverty.<sup>69</sup> Cotton cloth being their main item of expenditure apart from food, the Indian peasant and worker must clearly be economising in the barest necessities of life. Whoever called India "the brightest jewel in the British Crown" must have had a macabre sense of humour.

Increasing poverty has been accompanied by a falling standard of health. A single influenza epidemic in 1918-19 resulted in 11,000,000 deaths.<sup>70</sup> Among prevalent diseases those due to under-nourishment are especially common. According to the report of an enquiry instituted by the Director of the Indian Medical Service, tuberculosis is widely disseminated and "increasing steadily and rather rapidly." The last Census showed that the expectation of life (at birth) was 26.91 years for males and 26.56 years for females—figures which should be compared with the average length of life in 1881, which was calculated to be 30.75 years.<sup>71</sup>

"Why in the name of glory were they proud?"<sup>72</sup> The poet's query fits the Empire builders of our own day as well as those for whom it was written. The answer is that while the Indian peasant lives on one-seventh of the "dole" of an unemployed British worker, huge fortunes are being made from his poverty and from the exploitation of industrial labour.

From the plantations, mainly owned by European Companies, dividends up to 225 per cent have been received in recent years.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, as we have seen in the case of the railways, the Government has always been willing to help out the capitalist at the cost of the Indian peasant when there has been any difficulty. Sir George Campbell in his *Memoirs* tells how a private company established a system of irrigation in Orissa, and failed to make it pay. As a result, we read:

"That happened which usually happens when British capitalists have put their money into losing concerns

in India, people in London bullied and abused the Government to get the concern taken over and eventually they were successful. The Government paid out the company in full, with an additional bonus, and have since expended a great deal more, making upwards of three millions sterling. From that day to this the concern has hardly ever paid its working expenses, much less a farthing of interest on the capital."<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, thanks to the guarantee system, shares in the G.I.P. Railway, then working at a loss, were bought in 1885 at a premium of 25 per cent. The peasant paid the losses.

The deliberate development of Indian industries, dating roughly from the time of the War, brought new capitalist interests into the field.<sup>75</sup> For the first time British investors were officially encouraged to foster these Indian industries, and His Majesty's Trade Commissioner in India, in a Report on the Prospects of British Trade, held before them the lure of a lower income tax in this new Paradise for Capital.

One of the enormous advantages of the Indian Empire had been in the past the deflection of a vast proportion of Government business in the direction of Britain. Just as the British investor has always had the first chance when loans have been raised, so British firms have had a virtual monopoly in the supply of Government stores and railway material, and, of course, in all engineering contracts.<sup>76</sup> By a resolution of December, 1929, the Government of India now decided to modify this policy and allow India to produce all Government requirements whenever the Indian product was considered "sufficiently good for the purpose."<sup>77</sup>

The Jute industry was one of the first Indian industries in which British capital became interested. Founded in 1855 by an Englishman, it was employing half a million workers in 1924. Thus a trade which was once centred in Dundee grew up around Calcutta<sup>78</sup> under British control, to the ruin of the Scottish industry. According to Miss Vera Anstey, thirty-two of the Indian jute mills paid 100 per cent dividends in at least one year between 1918 and 1927. During the same period twenty-nine mills paid at least 20 per cent each year and ten mills never



less than 40 per cent.<sup>79</sup> Figures in *The Investor's India Year Books* from 1928-30 show that the Hooghly Mills Company paid an average annual dividend of 125 per cent between 1918 and 1928.<sup>80</sup> In 1928, when at least five companies were paying 100 per cent or over, the owners decided to increase factory hours from fifty-four to sixty per week and to reduce wages. The workers, like the wicked animal in the French couplet, defended themselves when thus attacked by going on strike.

Coal companies have not been far behind in enterprise. While wages varied from  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  per day (for women, in some of the mines) to *i.e.*  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  for skilled labour, dividends rose in 1923 to 150 per cent in the case of one firm and 85 per cent in the case of two others. In 1931 over 10 per cent was paid by seventeen colliery companies, of which five paid over 30 per cent. One of these firms paid  $57\frac{1}{2}$  per cent and one 80 per cent.<sup>81</sup> According to the Whitley Report the miners meanwhile lived on a diet of rice and salt. Some of the highest dividends have been paid by the East India Coal Co., with an imposing list of directors which includes the name of Sir Harcourt Butler, formerly Governor of the United Provinces.

Central Provinces' Manganese Shares caused consternation in 1926, paying only 100 per cent owing to Russian competition.<sup>82</sup> In 1928, however, the capital was increased by a share bonus, and still paid  $22\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the watered capital for 1929 and 1930, the shares selling in February, 1931, at 43*s.* 6*d.*<sup>83</sup> In 1931 the slump in metals reduced dividends to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  per cent tax free, and in 1932 the shareholders must have been almost starving on a dividend of 9 per cent, less tax.

Even the banks have their pittance. According to the *Investor's India Year Books* the Imperial Bank of India paid a dividend of 16 per cent in 1927 and 12 per cent in 1931. The Allahabad Bank in 1920 and 1931 paid a 12 per cent dividend plus a 6 per cent bonus. The Calcutta financial journal *Capital*<sup>84</sup> tells us that the (British-owned) National Bank of India paid an annual dividend of 20 per cent for the nine years preceding 1932, in which year the Chairman announced a 20 per cent interim dividend plus "a

further dividend at the same rate less income tax."<sup>85</sup> This still left sufficient profit to add £50,000 to the Officers' Pension Fund.

Some other banks were even more fortunate. *Capital* tells us that the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, which is a British-American Bank doing extensive business throughout Asia, paid 64 per cent annually from 1924-28, 56 per cent for the next two years, and 48 per cent in 1931-32.<sup>86</sup> The Chartered Bank of India (British-owned) paid 20½ per cent from 1924 to 1930.

The total value of British investments in India is difficult to assess. In the words of Mr. C. B. Sayer, formerly Secretary of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce:

"Most people have no real conception of either its magnitude or diversity. . . . External capital enters India in such a number of forms that any calculation must be largely guesswork."<sup>87</sup>

Mr. Sayer estimated the total British capital invested in India to be £573,000,000, including the stock of Companies registered in and outside of India, and State debts. £175,000,000 of this total represented commercial investment.<sup>88</sup>

This means an enormous tribute in interest and dividends. "Home Charges" alone in a typical year (1929-30) amounted to £25,760,250, of which over twelve millions represented interest on the public debt,<sup>89</sup> while nearly six millions were spent in pensions and furlough charges (i.e. extra holiday pay) for British officials. Judging by the dividends already cited, 10 per cent is probably not too high an average to take for the yield on commercial investments, which would produce at this rate another 17.5 millions. We thus reach over 43 millions, which the salaries of British officials would make up to an annual sum of about £50,000,000 in a prosperous year.

Mr. Geoffrey Tyson, a member of the staff of *Capital*, affirms that

"It has been computed that every fifth man in Great Britain is dependent, either directly or indirectly, on our Indian connection for his livelihood."<sup>90</sup>

The same proportion was given by Lord Rothermere in his statement that at least four shillings in the pound of our national income came from this source—a fact which his Lordship further elaborated by reminding his readers that:

“Without the profits which Great Britain draws from her commerce with India the most ruthless Chancellor of the Exchequer would be unable to raise enough revenue to provide old-age pensions, unemployment relief, education grants and all the other State allowances which are regarded by their beneficiaries in this country as part of the automatic routine of existence.”<sup>91</sup>

Such is the system which V. H. Rutherford described as “the lowest and most immoral system of Government in the world—the exploitation of one nation by another.”<sup>92</sup> And here indeed is the explanation of Engels’ description of the British working classes, enjoying with their masters “the fruits of the British colonial monopoly.”<sup>93</sup> This workers’ share of the fruits has been small; but, such as it is, this share and the advantages of “democracy” have been among the concessions which British capitalism has made in return for the loyalty of a working class which has never failed to support it in war. The history of the Roman Republic has been repeated in terms of modern capitalism.

The future of imperialism will be increasingly concerned with colonial investments. But the older economic interests are still powerful, though of steadily diminishing importance. For example, by a policy of imperial preference the Indian consumer has been made to pay more heavily for his purchases in order to assist the British manufacturer—such has been the condition upon which tariffs have been raised since the War to placate the interests of Indian capitalism and British capital invested in India.

Thus the Steel Industry (Protection) Act of 1927 gave preference in India to British steel and iron.<sup>94</sup> Inevitably the principle was soon applied to cotton. The Excise Duty, condemned even by the *London Times*<sup>95</sup> as “morally indefensible,” had been removed after prolonged agitation, and a cotton tariff slowly built up. In 1930 the Government introduced a Tariff Bill into the Legislative Assembly

raising the duty on cotton piece goods to 15 per cent *ad valorem*, with an additional 5 per cent duty on non-British goods.<sup>96</sup> Lancashire protested against the rise, India against the preference; but the Government had to reconcile its need for revenue with two powerful capitalist interests. The Tariff Bill was aimed principally at Japan, and was the first of a series of discriminatory tariffs that reached 75 per cent on non-British plain grey goods in 1933.<sup>97</sup>

The 1930 Tariff Bill was passed in the Indian Legislative Assembly by a piece of open blackmail, Sir George Raftly telling the Indian propertied classes that further protection for the Indian cotton industry was conditional upon their endorsement of preference for Great Britain.<sup>98</sup> By a small majority in India's sham Parliament the Bill was therefore pushed through with the help of the Government's nominated bloc. This manoeuvre was an example of what is called Indian Fiscal Autonomy.

A steadily rising tariff against non-British cotton goods failed, however, to exclude the products of Japan. Japan, like Britain, produces finer goods than the Indian mills; and the Indian Government has, in the main, concerned itself with the competition between these two foreign powers in the finer fabrics, seeking to assist Lancashire.<sup>99</sup> The Japanese mills however, unlike those of Lancashire, are able to use the short staple cotton of India, and consume most of India's export of raw cotton. The Japanese therefore retaliated against the Indian tariff policy by declaring a boycott of Indian raw cotton, securing as a result a trade agreement early in 1934 whereby the quota of Japanese imported cotton goods was to stand in proportion to Indian exports of raw cotton to Japan.<sup>100</sup>

From these facts it will be observed that the interests of British trade have been fostered as carefully by the Government as the interests of British investors, but less effectively for reasons beyond control. "Reciprocal" tariff preferences which were extended by the Ottawa Agreement have in point of fact favoured British trade in every instance. Not only have Indian commodities been more highly taxed than British, with smaller preferences in the rates of taxation,<sup>101</sup> but these preferences have

been mainly confined in past years to a few luxury articles on the one hand (such as Indian silk, saccharin, lace, etc.), whilst on the other hand Indian preferences in such commodities as steel and cotton affect vast British industries.

In shipping the same discrimination applies. Though at last an Indian shipping industry has come into being once more, it is severely hampered by the monopoly of all Government contracts, including especially the mail service, which is still held by British companies.<sup>102</sup> Until 1922 these British companies, though handling all Indian Government contracts, were actually exempt from the Indian income tax. Nine per cent of the total profits of British shipping comes from this carefully fostered Indian trade, the freight bill in 1922 being estimated at £14,000,000.<sup>103</sup>

Discrimination has long characterised the purchases of the Government, which imported goods to the average annual value of over 7.5 millions sterling during the War, and has since varied from 4.8 millions to 16 millions in the value of its annual imports. The percentage of Government foreign purchases which came from the United Kingdom varied from 65 per cent to 93 per cent between 1919 and 1928, showing clearly the economic policy of the Government.<sup>104</sup> An India Stores Department is maintained in London with the object of directing all Government foreign purchases to Great Britain wherever possible; and a study of the *Board of Trade Journal* will show that tenders for Indian Government contracts are regularly invited in Britain and India simultaneously.<sup>105</sup>

The possibilities and uses of Governmental discrimination in favouring British trade are, in fact, almost inexhaustible. In the Indian States there is no doubt that the advice and influence of British "Residents" is used for this purpose, and "the whole system of higher and technical education in the Indian universities and in trade and commercial schools is based on British standards. Hence British equipment, British machinery, British specifications, British methods are the usual standard."<sup>106</sup>

Profits from the Exchange make up the total of British commercial interests in India. In every transaction between

India and any foreign country the rupee must first be converted into sterling and thence into the currency of the country in question. 'On this transaction a small profit, estimated at a little under 3 per cent of the amount involved, is made by British banks. In addition to this staple industry, British financiers have for years shown remarkable skill in juggling with the rate of exchange to their own advantage, an example being the purchase of Indian silver in 1933. In this year, \$10,000,000 was paid by Britain to America in silver at 50 cents per ounce, this same silver having been obtained from the Indian Government at 32.5 cents per ounce. The net profit on this deal was nearly a million pounds.<sup>107</sup>

India has been described by a professor of the Sorbonne as "the typical colony for exploitation";<sup>108</sup> and Sir George Chesney, in stating his case for British rule, has outlined the economic basis of its necessity to British capitalism.<sup>109</sup> He asks us to consider:

"the array of vested interests involved, the capital sunk, the numbers dependent on its returns, the importance of Indian products to British industry, the number of British employed in the country either officially or commercially,<sup>110</sup> the array of persons on this side—merchants, shippers, distributors, producers and consumers."

These interests are among the greatest sources of wealth to our ruling class; and of this wealth the British worker has had in the past his jackal's share. Here also is the explanation of the fact that those in this country who most ingeniously contend that colonial possessions have no economic value are among the most zealous defenders of our own imperial interests.<sup>111</sup>

But for the British workers the more sinister significance of Empire is at last becoming apparent. In the past, as we have observed, the dividends of imperialism have enriched our ruling class, which has found it worth while to tax itself more heavily than any other capitalist class in the world. And from these taxes have come the social services which are the price of working class loyalty.<sup>112</sup> To-day, however, these dividends are drawn from colonial

industries which compete increasingly with those of our own country. Indian workers toiling ten hours a day for a shilling or less, women and children working for starvation wages—these are the competitors who will increasingly influence the standard of living among British workers while the Empire lasts. In this capitalists' Paradise there are few restrictive laws, there is no unemployment insurance to be paid and no health insurance.<sup>113</sup> Finally, the repressive powers of an autocratic government can always be used, as they were at Meerut, to break up every attempt at effective organisation among the workers.<sup>114</sup>

Hence we may look to a future of increasing unemployment among British workers, whilst among those who retain their jobs it must

“be realised that the level of wages and other costs of production . . . must not differ widely from the corresponding level in other countries.”<sup>115</sup>

In plain words, those workers who do not share the fate of the operatives in the jute mills of Dundee, whose jobs have migrated to Bengal, may anticipate a steady reduction of their wages and hours to the competitive conditions of coolie labour. Never were the words of Engels more clearly illustrated than in this demonstration that “a people which oppresses another people cannot itself be free.”<sup>116</sup>

In discussing the maladministration of India we have avoided any detailed consideration of Government expenditure, in view of the fact that the commonest complaint—the relatively heavy expenditure on the Indian Army—has now become so universally applicable that it can no longer be regarded as peculiar to India. It may, however, be remarked that one quarter of the army is made up of British soldiers to the number of about 60,000, who are maintained at the cost of the Indian peasant, and that a British soldier costs between three and four times as much as an Indian soldier.<sup>117</sup> The principal function of the army is the subjection of “disturbed” areas and the general protection of the Empire as a whole against revolution or the forces of rival Powers.<sup>118</sup>

Many years ago the Secretary of State for India pointed

out that India paid for all troops sent from Britain from the moment of their departure, whilst Indian troops were used by Britain and their ordinary pay charged to the Indian exchequer. This, he said, was "the general practice."<sup>119</sup> Hence the disproportionate Indian expenditure on her army is part of the exploitation of the country for general imperial purposes.<sup>120</sup> In return for this, and an annual grant of £100,000 towards British naval expenditure, it is alleged that Britain protects India's interests on the high seas. This method of shutting the stable door when the horse is stolen begs the question as to whether a conquered and exploited country can be protected by its conquerors against conquest or exploitation.

The Capitation Charges, by which India pays for the training of British soldiers in Britain, were limited in 1926 to a lump sum of £1,400,000 per annum, and in 1932 reduced further and approximately balanced by an Imperial contribution to India's "defence."<sup>121</sup>

Since 1918 the "Indianisation" of the army is supposed to have been progressing. In that year it was decided to admit to Sandhurst ten Indian candidates every year to qualify for the King's Commission.<sup>122</sup> These Indian officers, however, were not to be employed in the Artillery or in the Tank or Engineering corps.<sup>123</sup> The Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India is recently reported to have explained "the reasons for the comparatively slow progress which is being made in the Indianisation of the Indian Army."<sup>124</sup> Whatever may have been Sir Philip Chetwode's explanation, Indians are perfectly well aware that Turkey and Japan built up their armies in a few decades with the help of a small number of foreign experts, and that one reason for the pace of Indianisation is that an Indian army would save the country some twenty-two million pounds sterling per annum, which now go into British pockets. The other reason is that no Indian army under Indian officers could be relied upon indefinitely to act as the instrument of foreign rule.<sup>125</sup> It is for this reason that the British forces in India to-day include all the armoured car companies and air squadrons and two-thirds of the artillery batteries.



Under the new constitution the army will remain free from even the pretence of Indian control. As in the past, the frontier tribes will be bombed at the Viceroy's discretion, whilst British ministers express their horror at acts of aggression by other Powers. And the same arguments which were used to break up the Disarmament Conference<sup>126</sup> will be made to justify future punitive expeditions against those who offer resistance to the steady encroachments of British imperialism. As in the past it will be argued that there is some mystic resemblance between the bombing of frontier villages and the functions of a policeman on traffic duty in Piccadilly; while re-assuring headlines will continue to inform the British public that the frontier tribes greeted our forces with "cheers of gratitude."<sup>127</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The facts given here came to the notice of the present author when in the North Kheri Forests, where the United Provinces border upon Nepal. At that time (1930) the discovery that "protection" was killing the forests had recently been made. In the company of three Forestry Officers the author drove along the border between Nepal and the United Provinces, noting the contrast which was actually visible between the forest lands on either side of the broad clearing that marked the frontier. On the left (where the forest fires of Nepal had swept up to this clearing) there was little undergrowth and clear visibility for about 200 yards. Trees were of varying sizes. On the right it was possible to see only about twenty yards through the thick scrub of the "protected" forest land of India, and the trees were mostly of the same size—"very few of them under forty years of age," as one of the Forestry Officers remarked. Shortly after this a Government Report (quoted in *The Leader*, Allahabad, (Feb. 7th, 1930) referred to the fact that "the burning of regeneration areas is having beneficial effects"; and mentioned experiments with deer-proof enclosures.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Willcocks, of Assuan fame, is perhaps the greatest authority in the world on irrigation. In a lecture at Calcutta University in February, 1930, on "The Ancient System of Irrigation in Bengal and its Application to Modern Problems," Sir William concluded that "after seeing the results of seventy years of abandonment of it there is nothing before the country but to return to it." According to Willcocks, the system was introduced into Bengal by experts from the Euphrates and the Nile, where the practice of irrigation began some 6,000 years ago. Mr. Horace Alexander in *The Indian Ferment* (p. 178) notes an attack on the Government (for its neglect of irrigation) made in the Bengal Provincial Council in 1928.

<sup>3</sup> See Brailsford's *Rebel India* (p. 151). In the Punjab, which is "a favoured Province, for it breeds men and horses for the Army," the

old policy which kept the Sikhs "loyal" in the Mutiny is still continued and irrigation has been extensively carried out. Punjab peasants, asked by Brailsford whether Congress had any hold in their district, replied: "Our water would be cut off if we joined it."

<sup>4</sup> See Dutt, Vol I, Taxation of wells and its effects (p. 157). Ancient irrigation systems in Southern India (pp. 197-204 and 211-214). The same in Northern India (pp. 233, 247). Rejected proposals of H. T. Prinsep for Government construction of canals in 1828 (pp. 310-312). In the second volume Dutt shows how canal reconstruction began with Lord Hastings' realisation in 1815 that land revenue could be increased and that a charge for water "would make a most lucrative return" (p. 166). But owing to rival interests canal construction progressed much more slowly than that of railways.

<sup>5</sup> Dutt (Vol II, pp. 172-3) shows that, according to official figures, the land revenue was raised on a basis of profits varying from 24 per cent to 39 per cent on the capital outlay in irrigation works. This was in the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Sir Samuel Hoare (*The Times*, April 30th, 1932) the Sukkar Barrage will be paying 5.83 per cent by 1941 and 9.78 per cent by 1961.

<sup>6</sup> Evidence of Sir Charles Trevelyan before a Parliamentary Committee in 1873. Sir Charles had spent forty years in India and held the office of Governor of Madras. He said that "nothing can be better than the irrigation works of Southern India." (See Dutt, Vol II, pp. 381-2.)

<sup>7</sup> Evidence of Sir Arthur Cotton before the Select Committee of 1878.

<sup>8</sup> With reference to Ceylon, Sir Frederick Dickson, K.C.M.G., made this point clear in an article in the *English Magazine* of October, 1889.

<sup>9</sup> Brailsford quotes Willcocks in this connection in *Rebel India* (p. 124). A glance at the map will show how this principle works in the most notable case. The railway from Calcutta to Madras cuts the waterways at right angles, and the embankment is largely responsible for the extent of flood and famine in Bihar and Orissa. Even the bridging of rivers frequently leads to a change in their course, resulting in villages being swept away.

<sup>10</sup> This quotation is from a letter by an Englishman, written in 1932. His position makes it impossible to reveal his name. The Simon Report says that "four-fifths of the cultivated area of the country is dependent upon a precarious rainfall" (i.e., is not irrigated).

<sup>11</sup> Dutt (Vol II, p. 536) shows that in the "comparative prosperity" of 1881-82 the total exports and imports valued 83 millions sterling. In the famine of 1900-1901 they rose to 122 millions.

<sup>12</sup> The peasant, it is true, used at one time to hoard silver, when he could get it, as a means of providing against famine. By demonetising silver the Government halved the value of these savings. (See Hyndman's *Bankruptcy of India*.)

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter IX.

<sup>14</sup> This recent increase is not really remarkable when compared with the increase in Britain up to the time of the War.

<sup>15</sup> These figures are obtained by dividing the population as given in the Census figures by the area in square miles at each corresponding Census year. The actual figures per square mile up to 1921 were

Year	British India	England & Wales	France
1871	215	389	174
1881	227	445	182
1891	229	497	185
1901	210	558	188
1911	223	618	189
1921	226	649	184

<sup>18</sup> The 1921 Census of India shows that, between 1871 and 1921, 43.3 millions were added to the Indian population by "inclusion of new areas," while another 15.7 millions were estimated to have been added by "Improvement of methods" (i.e., Census methods). This accounted for 59 millions out of a total increase of 112.8 millions, leaving only 53.8 millions real increase. The area of British India increased from 860,000 square miles in 1871 to 1,096,171 square miles in 1931. There was even an increase of territory between 1921 and 1931.

<sup>17</sup> Figures from *Population*, by A. M. Carr-Saunders.

<sup>18</sup> The Indian average population per square mile in 1921 was only just over a third of the British average. Comparative Census figures per square mile were:

	1921	1931
Belgium .. ..	654	702
England and Wales ..	649	685
Netherlands .. ..	544	631
Germany .. ..	332	348
British India .. ..	226	248

<sup>19</sup> The following figures show this increasing dependency on agriculture:

Census Year	Percentage of population dependent on Agriculture
1891	61
1901	66
1911	72
1921	73
1931	66

The growth of new Indian industries since 1921 explains the 1931 figure and is the key to future development.

<sup>20</sup> *The Population of India*, quoted by Harold Wright in *Population*.

<sup>21</sup> England and France each increased by about 5 per cent between 1921 and 1931.

<sup>22</sup> Pages 115-116.

<sup>23</sup> Dutt, Vol I, pp. 92-93.

<sup>24</sup> See Philip Francis on the plight of Benares (Select Committee's Tenth Report, 1783. Appendix 7).

<sup>25</sup> Under the Bengal Permanent Settlement. (See Dutt, Vol I, p. 94.)

<sup>26</sup> See Dutt, Vol I, p. 371. He quotes the evidence of Robert Richards (one of the Company's servants) that in the nineteenth century land was even assessed as cultivated which had "been nothing but jungle within the memory of man."

<sup>27</sup> See *India under Ripon*, by W. S. Blunt, pp. 245-6, for the connection between taxation and indebtedness.

<sup>28</sup> Whitley Report, p. 229. The Report refers briefly to early laws against usury which were "a prominent feature of various religious and national codes," adding that "the leading religions of India affirm the principle underlying them." The Koran likens the usurer to those "whom Satan has infected by his touch," and explicitly forbids usury. More recently the Government has done a little to limit usury in order to save the peasant enough to pay his taxes.

<sup>29</sup> Dutt (Vol I, p. 312) estimates that £225,000,000 was spent on railways up to 1900, resulting in a loss to the taxpayer of £40,000,000, and that £25,000,000 was spent on irrigation in the same period. According to the *Statistical Abstract of British India*, the proportion even by 1925-26 was only 96 crores of rupees on irrigation to 626 crores on railways.

<sup>30</sup> *East India Papers* (London, 1820). Dacoity, he said, would be preferable to the British judicial system.

<sup>31</sup> Continuation to Mill's *History*. Vol VII, p. 230.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted by Dutt, Vol I, p. 414. The Government, he said, "sets the people aside in the management of their own concerns much more than the Sepoy in the government of the army." Even to the historian, H. H. Wilson, "the Indian public" meant simply the Europeans resident in that country! (See Mill, Vol VIII, p. 414.)

<sup>33</sup> *Notes on Indian Affairs*, by the Hon. F. J. Shore (London, 1837), Vol II, p. 516.

<sup>34</sup> Much of this information was later published by William Digby, C.I.E., in *Prosperous British India* (London, 1901). It makes appalling reading.

<sup>35</sup> *India of the Queen and other Essays*, p. 151. Hunter was the greatest statistical expert of his time in the Indian services.

<sup>36</sup> Sir Charles Elliott, K.C.S.I., quoted by William Digby in *Prosperous British India*, p. 509.

<sup>37</sup> *India of the Queen*, p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> Article by Sir Daniel Hamilton in the *Calcutta Review*, July, 1916.

<sup>39</sup> This astonishing theory was put forward by Sir John Strachey in a speech at Calcutta on Jan. 27th, 1877, justifying the incidence of taxation. The speech is quoted in Hyndman's *Bankruptcy of India*.

<sup>40</sup> Mr. Yusuf Ali, writing in the *Spectator* (July 26th, 1930).

<sup>41</sup> This statement is made on the authority of Professor Shah of the Bombay School of Economics and Sociology, in a private letter to the author (replying to questions on this subject).

<sup>42</sup> *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689* (London, 1696). "No man is hereditary there, either to Estate or Honours," was Ovington's astonished comment.

<sup>43</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 28th, 1933. Taxation at anything approaching British proportions would, of course, be infinitely more disastrous in a country where the mass of people are already on the verge of starvation and the weight of taxation falls far more on the poorer classes.

<sup>44</sup> For example, a tax at 4s. in the £1 would mean that for every £5 paid in interest on a Government loan, £1 would return in revenue. Consequently 5 per cent interest would be reduced in effect to 4 per cent.

By the present arrangement this rebate goes into the British Exchequer as a large proportion of the National Debt.

<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that Sir William Hunter in *The Indian Empire* (London, 1882) declared that "the collection of the land tax forms the main work of Indian administration." (Our italics.) Hyndman quoted Lord Lawrence as having said that good cattle had become rarer during his time in India. Sir William Wedderburn attributed this growing poverty largely to the system of land revenue and assessment. (See *Sir William Wedderburn and the Indian Reform Movement*, by S. K. Ratcliffe.)

<sup>46</sup> Dr. Oldfield considered that the villagers had "only half enough to live upon." (See *The Ruining of India* by William Digby, p. 159). Ramsay MacDonald in *The Awakening of India* spoke as strongly.

<sup>47</sup> Slater's introductory note to Pillai's *Economic Conditions in India*. The Rev. J. Knowles of the London Missionary Society (as quoted in Digby's *Ruining of India*) gave an example where the average income among 300 persons was a farthing per head per day. "They did not live," he said, "they eked out an existence." Dr. V. H. Rutherford in *Modern India* (pp. 85-108) gives much useful information on the condition of the peasantry up to 1927.

<sup>48</sup> Vol II, p. 207. The Commissioners compared this figure with the British average, which they estimated roughly at £95 per head.

<sup>49</sup> Report for 1927-8 by Dr. C. A. Bentley, Director of Health for the Province of Bengal. "Their vitality," he added, "is now so undermined by inadequate diet they cannot stand the infection of foul diseases."

<sup>50</sup> *Journal of the East India Association*, July, 1930, p. 197.

<sup>51</sup> See for example Mr. J. B. Pennington's statement in the *Journal* cited above (p. 201): "Give him reliable irrigation, and I doubt if any agriculturist in the world gets more out of the land than the Indian ryot as I knew him sixty years ago."

<sup>52</sup> *Some Aspects of the Batai Cultivation in Lyallpur District of the Punjab*, by Professor Stewart. Mr. M. L. Darling, in his book *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and in Debt* shows the chronic agricultural indebtedness in this Province.

<sup>53</sup> H. N. Brailsford in *Rebel India* (pp. 28-30). Mr. Brailsford attributes largely to this fact the movement which swung the peasants in 1930 behind the National Congress "as its staunchest supporters." His figures are borne out by the official statistics published by the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics at Calcutta. By 1933-4 (according to the *Economist's* Indian supplement of Dec. 12th, 1936) crops had fallen by 53.4 per cent from the 1928-9 figure. Professor P. G. Thomas in *The Economic Journal* (Sept., 1935) says that during the fourteen months between October, 1929, and December, 1930, "most of India's staple prices fell more than 40 per cent." A report in the *Investor's Chronicle* of April 1st, 1933, says "20 per cent to 50 per cent less than pre-war prices."

<sup>54</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 17th, 1935. (Leading article.)

<sup>55</sup> *The Economic Journal*, September, 1935, pp. 471-2. "The instinct of the Indian peasant," writes Professor Thomas, "has served the country better than all the intricate reasoning of the economist and the administrator." This, of course, is only half the truth; for foreign rule and

poverty have led to widespread apathy among the peasants which (in turn) fosters the system which creates it. See *Rebel India*, pp. 128-9. For the effects of landlordism see the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, p. 425.

<sup>56</sup> Though *proportionately* small, it must not be forgotten that the number of Indian workers in industries exceeds 15,000,000.

<sup>57</sup> *The Indian Peasant Uprooted*, by Margaret Read. Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. H. Whitley, Chairman of the Royal Commission on Labour in India. (London, 1931.)

<sup>58</sup> Figures for Calcutta were not available, but the Whitley Commissioners thought that overcrowding there was "probably unequalled in any other industrial area of India."

<sup>59</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 59. He noted also the size of the dwellings, ten to twelve feet square, without windows or chimneys.

<sup>60</sup> *The Times*, Sept. 8th, 1933.

<sup>61</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 62. According to Brailsford, these "black holes" supply 400 persons with three water taps "and stinking privies at a distance of 200 yards."

<sup>62</sup> *The Labour Woman*, February, 1933.

<sup>63</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 105.

<sup>64</sup> The Whitley Commissioners compared these figures with the rate of 51 per 1,000 for England and Wales in 1930. The British rate has since fallen even lower, and the Public Health Report for 1936 states that India's rate of infantile mortality is the highest in the world.

<sup>65</sup> Such figures as these make Mr. Gandhi's opposition to birth control appear almost criminal. It is, indeed, remarkable that his enemies generally neglect this aspect of his philosophy whilst attacking him at far less vulnerable points.

<sup>66</sup> See Mr. A. Pearse's *Report on the Cotton Industry of India*, also the resolution on this subject passed in 1926 by the All-India Conference of Medical Research Workers, which stated that the loss of efficiency from preventable malnutrition and disease was not less than 20 per cent. This resolution also recorded the view that deaths from preventable disease amounted to 5 or 6 millions annually.

<sup>67</sup> See Chapter XI.

<sup>68</sup> "Very young children," says the Report, "sleep alongside their mothers on piles of wool, their faces and clothes covered with germ-laden dust." The Commissioners found "reason to believe" that corporal punishment was used in the case of smaller children, and that parents did not protest because they were in debt to the employers.

<sup>69</sup> These figures were given by the Chairman of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China at its general meeting (*Daily Telegraph*, March 30th, 1933). They include both foreign and indigenous cloth consumed in India, and are therefore unaffected by the boycott of foreign goods. Professor Thomas shows that the Indian consumption of sugar *per caput* also fell from an average of 7.7 lbs. in 1925-30 to 5.8 lbs. in 1932-33 (i.e. by 24 per cent). See *The Economic Journal*, September, 1935, p. 477.

<sup>70</sup> Brailsford in *Rebel India* says 13,000,000. The estimate given here is the lowest of those usually quoted.

<sup>71</sup> This figure is given by Sir William Hunter in *The Indian Empire*

(p. 667). In England and Wales the average expectation of life is steadily rising, and stands to-day at about 55 years.

<sup>72</sup> Keats' *Isabella*. Stanzas 14, 15 and 16 form a magnificent indictment of economic imperialism in any age.

<sup>73</sup> Miss Beauchamp in *British Imperialism in India* (p. 101) cites figures from the *Investor's India Year Book* (1929-30) showing that Tea Companies have paid the following dividends:

Company	Divd.	Years
Bishnauth Tea Co. .. ..	42½%	1927
" " " " " " " " " "	30 %	1928
New Dooars Tea Co. .. ..	225%	1924
Chulsa Tea Co. .. ..	30 %	1923-7
" " " " " " " " " "	75 %	1928
Jhanzie Tea Assn., Ltd. ..	40% to 45%	1924-8

<sup>74</sup> *Memoirs of my Indian Career* (London, 1893), Vol II, p. 161.

<sup>75</sup> This change of economic policy, already noted, was due to many causes. Among these were the pressure of competition (necessitating cheaper methods of production) the need to make concessions to Indian capitalism, and considerations of imperial war preparation. The last point was specifically mentioned in the Report of the Industrial Commission which was set up after the War and re-emphasised in a report by H. M. Trade Commissioner in India entitled *Prospects of British Trade in India at the Close of the War*, (1919).

<sup>76</sup> This principle has been applied in the most minute detail. See, for example, the following Memo. (No. F 215-9-30, dated 12th Sept., 1930) signed by Mr. I. S. Bingemann, District Magistrate of 24-Parganas to the Departments under his control: "In future in making purchases preference is to be given to British goods. Except for special reasons no American goods are to be purchased. For example, the Imperial typewriter, which is a British machine, is to be given preference." Questioned regarding this circular by the Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal replied that it was not a matter of public importance regarding which Government would enter into any further correspondence. (Letter No. 18060, p. Dec. 18th, 1930.)

<sup>77</sup> Resolution S. 217, Department of Industries and Labour.

<sup>78</sup> There are also two centres of this industry in the Madras Presidency. Though under British control, a majority of the shares is now held by Indians.

<sup>79</sup> *The Economic Development of India*, p. 282. Commenting on these figures Mr. Brailsford in *Rebel India* (p. 145) says that he calculates these mills during the early post-War years paid £100 in profits for every £12 they paid in wages.

<sup>80</sup> This Company paid 100 per cent in 1919 plus a bonus of 300 per cent, though the greatest profits in the industry were made during the actual war years. Even in the depression years we learn from *Capital* (Jan. 26th, 1932) that in 1931 over 10 per cent was paid by thirty-four jute firms, of which twenty-two paid over 20 per cent, and two as high as 40 per cent. Workers' wages meanwhile averaged about 4s. 6d. per week.

<sup>81</sup> Dividend figures for coal are given from the *Investor's Guide in Capital* (Calcutta), January 26th, 1932.

<sup>82</sup> See *The Indian Ferment*, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> *Sunday Express*, Feb. 8th, 1931. The Financial Editor commented that "as usual, the Russian product is unbeatable as to price," but it was not necessary to cut down dividends as the Company had "the benefit of an agreement with the consumers in this country which shuts out Russian manganese."

<sup>84</sup> January 26th, 1932.

<sup>85</sup> From the account of the Shareholders' Meeting in London on March 31st, 1932 (*The Spectator*, April 9th, 1932). The following year *The Investor's Review* (April 8th, 1933) announced that the 20 per cent dividend was still being maintained, "notwithstanding," as the Chairman said, "that trading conditions during the past year were difficult."

<sup>86</sup> *Capital*, Jan. 26th, 1932.

<sup>87</sup> *Financial Times*, Jan. 9th, 1930. Mr. Sayer considered this figure a conservative estimate.

<sup>88</sup> *The Indian Year Book* in 1924 stated that "the great majority of the larger concerns are financed by European capital," and this is still true to-day.

<sup>89</sup> The Sterling Debt has since increased. According to the *Economist* (India Supplement, December 12th, 1936) it grew by 34 millions between 1926 and 1936, and on March 31st, 1936, stood at £376,000,000.

<sup>90</sup> *Danger in India*, by Geoffrey Tyson (with an Introduction by the Earl of Lytton). This computation would include the figures given above, plus our income from British imports into India and the profits from the British monopoly of Indian shipping.

<sup>91</sup> *Daily Mail*, June 3rd, 1930. This is probably the bluntest admission ever made of J. A. Hobson's thesis in *Work and Wealth* (p. 156) that we are moving towards an epoch when "western white nations may, as regards the means of livelihood, be mainly dependent upon the labour of regimented lower peoples." Bread and circuses, as in Roman times, are the safeguard of our ruling class against revolution at home; and it is because our Labour leaders prefer to take the bribe rather than face the risks of class struggle that they acquiesce in imperialist exploitation.

<sup>92</sup> *Modern India*, by V. H. Rutherford, (London, 1927), p. 77.

<sup>93</sup> Letter to Kautsky, Sept. 12th, 1882. Marx, Engels and Lenin all attributed the backwardness of working-class development in Britain largely to the snares of British imperialism. For comparison it may be noted that in Germany the period of internal social reforms corresponded with the growth of German imperialism. Thus a docile working class was used for war purposes and paid from the surplus profits of colonial exploitation.

<sup>94</sup> *International Competition in the Trade of India*, by George B. Roorbach. Carnegie Endowment Publication, March, 1931. There was already in existence a preferential export duty whereby skins and hides exported to countries within the Empire obtained a two-thirds rebate. (See *The Commerce of Nations*, by Bastable and Gregory.)

<sup>95</sup> *The Times*, March 5th, 1917. For the operation of the Cotton Excise see Chapter IX.

<sup>96</sup> *International Competition in the Trade of India*. (Quoted above.) 15 per cent was at that time the general tariff level in India, the cotton tariff having till then been kept lower in the interests of Lancashire.



The *Labour Bulletin* of August, 1931, pointed out that Wedgwood Benn telegraphed the Viceroy in February, 1930, placing before him the Lancashire point of view, but that the Indian Government had to face a deficit of £9,750,000 on a budget of about £102,000,000.

<sup>97</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, June 7th, 1933.

<sup>98</sup> As explained in previous chapters, the Legislative Assembly has no real control. When in 1924 the Assembly rejected the Budget because the unpopular salt tax had been doubled, the Viceroy passed it by "certification." In this case the Assembly was offered the alternatives of either passing the Bill as it stood or accepting "something worse." It was powerless to put forward any alternative because no rejection of the Bill could remove the ministers. The National Congress was at this time unrepresented in the Assembly, owing to the boycott policy.

<sup>99</sup> By the raising of the tariff in 1933 to 75 per cent on non-British plain greys, the difference in duties was increased to 50 per cent *ad valorem*, as between British and non-British products. (*Manchester Guardian*, June 7th, 1933.)

<sup>100</sup> *The Economic Journal*, September, 1935. Pages 479-80. (Article by P. G. Thomas.) The reciprocal nature of Indo-Japanese trade in raw cotton and cotton piece goods aptly illustrates the entirely artificial nature of the Lancashire interest which the Government fosters.

<sup>101</sup> Thus, for example, when the Indian Cotton tariff in 1930 stood at 15 per cent on British products, Indian silk was taxed in Britain at the rate of 27.5 per cent. The British tax in this case was five-sixths of the full rate for non-Empire goods, whilst the Indian tax represented only three-quarters of the full rate. On November 13th, 1936, a resolution was passed in the Indian Legislative Assembly demanding the termination of the Ottawa Agreement, but the Government has since announced its intention of disregarding this resolution.

<sup>102</sup> All Government stores from Britain must, under the present orders, be carried in British ships.

<sup>103</sup> *The Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India*, by K. T. Shah and K. J. Khambata.

<sup>104</sup> A full table showing the Imports of Government stores between 1913 and 1929 is given in the Carnegie Endowment Publication, *International Competition in the Trade of India* (quoted above) on p. 202 (Appendix Z). Figures and percentages given here do not include the period 1930-36. The percentages of Government imports which came from the U.K. in the successive years 1919-28 were: 74, 93, 80, 88, 80, 82, 74, 70, 65, 74.

<sup>105</sup> Even more remarkable in the discrimination they betray are some of the advertisements regarding personnel. Thus an advertisement inserted by the Indian State Railways in the *Daily Herald* of August 3rd, 1932, inviting candidates to apply for a post, stated that they "must be British subjects of non-Asiatic domicile."

<sup>106</sup> *International Competition in the Trade of India* (pp. 115, 117). The same authority points out that British Companies in India naturally deflect a great deal of trade to Britain because the directors are "closely associated" with British manufacturers, whilst other foreign firms in India use British goods because their employees are more familiar with them. During the boycott of British goods in 1930 two Indian manufacturers complained to the present author that non-British

machinery had a curious habit of getting damaged on its way through the Customs Department.

<sup>107</sup> The price of silver had, of course, risen in the interim. The question raised, however, is why the "trustee" bought silver from his "ward" during a slump in that commodity, and in full knowledge that the price was going to rise.

<sup>108</sup> *America and the Race for World Dominion*, by A. Demangeon.

<sup>109</sup> *India under Experiment*, by Sir George Chesney, London 1918, p. 191.

<sup>110</sup> Official salaries will be found in the *Statesman's Year Book*. The discrepancy between official salaries in India and the income of the peasants is illustrated by the case of the Viceroy. His salary is £19,000 a year (about four times that of the British Prime Minister) and it represents the income of about 5,000 peasants. The British Prime Minister has a salary of about 50 to 100 times the average British income. Other salaries are: Commander in Chief, £7,400; Members of Governor-General's Council, £6,000; Ten Provincial Governors, £4,900 to £9,000; Chief Justice, £5,300. "Allowances" are additional.

<sup>111</sup> Technically India is not a colony, but the political and economic characteristics of its administration are entirely on the colonial model. The author has here in mind those who deny the value of colonies to Germany but show no haste to be rid of our own "useless" possessions.

<sup>112</sup> In the British budget, grants to Health Insurance, Unemployment Insurance and Assistance and Widows Contributory Pensions, etc., form the biggest item after Debt interest and "Defence." With local and supplementary grants they will total about £100,000,000 in 1936-7.

<sup>113</sup> See the Whitley Report, pp. 35-6 and 265. The Commissioners note that "sickness is an important contributory cause of indebtedness" and that its incidence is "substantially higher than in Western countries."

<sup>114</sup> On the other side it should be noted that the "watering" of Lancashire capital has made it harder for the British industry to compete with that of Japan and India. Miss Freda Utey deals with this subject in *Lancashire and the Far East* (London, 1931).

<sup>115</sup> These words are quoted from the address of Mr. F. C. Goodenough, Chairman of Barclay's Bank, at the shareholders' annual meeting in 1932.

<sup>116</sup> This saying applies also, of course, to war, which is another cost paid by the working class for the privileges of empire. "Our people," wrote W. S. Blunt in his *Diaries* (Nov. 26th, 1897) "will soon begin to understand that they can't have the amusement of Empire without paying the price." The full cost will be realised when British fascism uses Indian sepoys to crush the British workers, just as Franco has used the Moors in Spain. Nor would the Indian troops be blameable; for, like the Moors, they have had nothing to gain from any major party in the "Home" country, and will naturally fall for fascist promises if "socialists" continue to deny them freedom.

<sup>117</sup> This is the estimate given in the Simon Report. A British officer costs six times as much as an Indian officer, and as much as twenty-four Indian soldiers, or more, according to his rank.

<sup>118</sup> Lord Lansdowne admitted before the Welby Commission that "the Indian Army is organised with a view to its employment upon

operations which have nothing to do with the internal policy of the country.”

<sup>119</sup> Welby Commission, 1895, Vol II, p. 293.

<sup>120</sup> Mr. Arnold Toynbee, in his *Survey of International Affairs*, gave the following list of percentages of military expenditure in the national budgets of various countries in 1929:

					Percentage of Expenditure on the Army :
India .. .. .	..	..	..	..	45.29
Japan .. .. .	..	..	..	..	26.57
Italy .. .. .	..	..	..	..	23.46
France .. .. .	..	..	..	..	19.75
U.S.A. .. .. .	..	..	..	..	16.09
Gt. Britain .. ..	..	..	..	..	14.75
Germany (pre-Hitler)	..	..	..	..	7.16

Mr. F. G. Pratt, I.C.S., has gone further into this question in a more recent publication entitled *The Military Burden on India*.

<sup>121</sup> These charges stood in 1920 at £28.5 for every soldier sent to India.

<sup>122</sup> Indians are, of course, still eligible for a “Viceroy’s Commission.” But (as the Simon Report points out) “the holder of a Viceroy’s Commission . . . is lower in rank and command than the most newly joined of British subalterns.” (Vol I, p. 101.)

<sup>123</sup> The Air Force has also been kept an exclusive preserve for British officers, owing to its strategic importance in case of revolt.

<sup>124</sup> Sir Philip Chetwode’s speech to Conservative M.P.s at the House of Commons (*Daily Telegraph*, March 31st, 1936). It is interesting to observe that Sir Philip so well understands the true position under the new “reforms” that he saw fit to attack Indian nationalists and their right even to criticise the Government’s military policy in a speech reported in the *Daily Herald* of Sept. 7th, 1934.

<sup>125</sup> The British troops constitute a foreign army of occupation and behave as such. The *Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 21st, 1935) reported the case in which a number of British soldiers were punished for a raid on the village of Penda on July 17th, 1935, which resulted in the death of one villager and the injury of twelve others. The soldiers, said the *Reuter* cable, “mistook the village for Karodi, inhabitants of which had assaulted a soldier the night before.”

<sup>126</sup> See *The Times* of July 8th, 1932, reporting Mr. Baldwin’s speech in the House defending the retention of bombing ‘planes and of tanks which “cannot be regarded as specifically offensive weapons.” British insistence on this point, with special regard to “policing” India and other parts of the Empire, is generally acknowledged to have been the reason for the failure of the Disarmament Conference at least to have abolished the bombing ‘plane.

<sup>127</sup> *News-Chronicle*, Aug. 1st, 1933. The cheers on this occasion were given by “three hundred headmen,” apparently of the Halimzai, which was later described as “one of the tribes receiving Government subsidies as agents in keeping the peace.” The gratitude of the bribed headmen was natural enough; but there were presumably others who did not cheer, including the Indian peasants who paid the bill and the Mohmands, whose homes were being destroyed.

## CHAPTER XV

### LAW AND ORDER

It is important to understand the methods of repression which are used when it is necessary to defend the interests which were briefly outlined in the last chapter. We are here confronted with the greatest of difficulties, arising from the fact that in most instances the almost unanimous testimony of Indian non-official witnesses is flatly contradicted by the Government, which generally bases its version on the *ipse dixit* of the accused officials, these being the "men on the spot."<sup>1</sup>

Much can be gathered, however, from the actual laws and ordinances of the Government, as officially published, and from official statements and statistics. Even here there is some difficulty arising from curious discrepancies in official statements. Thus, in February, 1932, Sir Samuel Hoare informed the House of Commons that 1,912 persons were imprisoned in the North-West Frontier Province and 548 in Bombay. At the same time Sir James Crerar stated officially in Delhi that there were 10,000 prisoners in the North-West Frontier Province and 750 in Bombay.<sup>2</sup>

No less confusing were some statements made in 1930 by Lt.-Colonel W. G. Hamilton, late Inspector-General of Prisons in Bengal. Lecturing to the East India Association he made the unqualified assertion that "transportation to the Andamans has been abolished." After the paper was read, Colonel Hamilton's attention was drawn to the fact that there were still some 8,000 prisoners on these islands, and confronted with this awkward and indisputable fact, the Colonel then admitted that owing to the congestion of the Punjab jails "prisoners from the Punjab were still being sent to the Andamans."<sup>3</sup>

In considering the categorical nature of the Colonel's original statement and the explanation given for the dis-

crepancy, it is of further interest to note that in 1936 the Andamans were still being used as a penal settlement, with no apparent prospect of their abandonment. On December 21st, 1932, Mr. Butler, the Under-Secretary of State for India, stated in the House of Commons that seventy-five convicts, mostly from Bengal, were being transferred to these islands, and that the "area of the gaol where these prisoners were to be lodged was now free from malaria."<sup>4</sup> In June, 1933, however, conditions in the Andamans were still so bad that over fifty prisoners at Port Blair began a hunger strike, from which three of them died.<sup>5</sup> Finally in February, 1934, the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, a Bengal paper, was heavily fined for publishing an article criticising the Government for sending prisoners to the Andamans, because such criticism brought the Government into "hatred and contempt." In view of the Government's own previous decisions and such announcements as Colonel Hamilton's, the hatred and contempt would appear to have been well earned.<sup>6</sup>

On the general subject of Indian jails it may be noted that the Bengal Jail Code allows for the continuous imposition of bar fetters on prisoners for six months, as a punishment.<sup>7</sup> In 1935 political prisoners in Alipore Central Jail were punished by separate confinement with bar fetters for three months, and their case was taken up by members of the Independent Labour Party in the House of Commons. This publicity resulted in correspondence between the Howard League for Penal Reform and the India Office, during which the Howard League pointed out that, under the rules recommended by the League of Nations, instruments such as bar fetters were held to be undesirable except as a "temporary restraint of violent prisoners," that they should be removed as soon as possible "and should not be applied again unless the prisoner recommences his violence."<sup>8</sup> Without disputing the Geneva recommendation, the India Office replied to the Howard League that:

"The punishments of standing handcuffs and cross-bar fetters have been abolished in the Central Provinces, but elsewhere Local Governments have, for the reasons

given in paragraphs 229-231 of the report of the Indian Jails Committee, 1919-20, felt it necessary to retain these punishments."<sup>9</sup>

Reference has already been made to the system of convict warders, and its inevitable results.<sup>10</sup> The general brutality of Indian jail administration may be studied in detail in revelations which arose from the prosecution of two British jailers in December, 1932, for causing grievous hurt to an Indian prisoner at Nasik Jail.<sup>11</sup> As a final comment on the jails, which have become the normal abodes of Indian patriots, it is significant that an American observer, who was indignant at Miss Mayo's general charges of uncleanness against Indians, remarked in 1931 that the most revolting place he had seen in India was the latrine in the Delhi Jail.<sup>12</sup>

In one of his lucid moments Mr. Macdonald once wrote: "A power of repression habitually enjoyed tends to develop a habit of mind in the Government which regards all effectively troublesome criticism as sedition. . . . The last chapter of bureaucracies is repression. They pass away like an old monarch driven from his throne, hurling accusations of sedition against his approaching successor."<sup>13</sup> The author of these truisms, written in criticism of the Indian Press Act of 1910 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1919, was destined to become the instrument of his own prophecy and the butt of his own joke.

By the Bengal Ordinance of November, 1931, the Government of Bengal was given authority to commandeer any property—movable or immovable—either without compensation or with such compensation as the local official considered "reasonable." Members of the public could be conscripted for the maintenance of what was euphemistically termed "law and order." Collective fines were permitted in areas "concerned in the commission of scheduled offences." Special tribunals of three were set up by which alleged offenders could be tried in secret and condemned to death or transportation for life by a majority verdict of two judges against one. No complete records were to be kept by these Courts but there was to

be "a memorandum only of the substance of the evidence." Accused persons could be tried in their absence; and, finally, against the orders and sentences of these special tribunals there was to be no appeal to the High Court.<sup>14</sup>

It must be remembered that, frightful as this ordinance was, it only carried to an extreme the principles upon which the existing law in India was based. Mr. Brailsford has even remarked in *Rebel India* that the Indian Penal Code is "so drastic that one wonders why emergency ordinances are ever necessary." It is also an interesting commentary on the interest which England takes—or is allowed to take—in the Empire of which she is so proud, that Mr. Gandhi when in London was quite unable to obtain a copy of the text of this ordinance except from the files of the India Office. An Indian province with a population greater than that of England and Wales had been deprived of the last vestiges of liberty and security; and all that the British public knew was that there was "trouble" in Bengal, and that stern and righteous officials had taken stern and righteous measures.

Ordinances of similar nature followed rapidly all over India, culminating in the almost fatuous viciousness of Ordinance No. 5 of 1932, which made it an illegal offence to say: "Don't buy British" to a person entering a shop or to "molest" such a person. Molesting was defined so as to include the making of a gesture of entreaty, such as raising the hands in an attitude of prayer.<sup>15</sup> This deliberate attempt to stamp out the Indian movement for supporting home industries actually corresponded with a big Tariff and "Buy British" campaign in England, where the same sentiments that were persecuted as high treason in India were regarded as the most fashionable form of patriotism.

To conceal the results of such legislation the Press was (and still is) carefully muzzled. On January 13th, 1932, the Bombay Government warned the Press against "Any immoderate criticisms of the Government or Government officials . . . any photographs of persons taking part in Congress activities or of any incidents relating to such activities." Such incidents clearly included baton charges by the police. The penalty threatened was fine and

imprisonment for editor, printer and publisher, and the Government Circular explained that its list of "offences" was "not exhaustive."<sup>16</sup>

At Allahabad two days later the District Magistrate issued a similar warning, explicitly stating that he considered pictures of *lathi* charges "objectionable" (i.e., actionable).<sup>17</sup> Films were banned in the same way, a typical instance being the order of the District Magistrate at Ahmedabad on January 17th, 1932, forbidding the exhibition of films featuring "the arrival of Mr. Gandhi in Bombay or any Congress activities." Telegrams and (in the North-West Frontier Province) letters were also subjected to careful censorship.

Under such orders as these, buildings, movable property and money were confiscated in innumerable cases. The full extent of repressive power exercised may be judged by an order issued on January 17th, 1932, by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate at Ellore in Madras, forbidding people among other things to have:

"any informal talks in furtherance or in sympathy with the Congress activities, including the closure of shops . . . or subscriptions to Congress or supply of provisions to them."<sup>18</sup>

Lest it should be imagined that the men entrusted with these enormous powers were just and discriminating persons who for some reason found it impossible to function properly except in secret tribunals or under cover of a censored Press, we have fortunately an expression of the attitude of these bureaucrats. The following quotation from one who claims to understand revolutionary mentality is at least revealing regarding the mentality of the writer:

"As President of the Special Tribunal for the Conspiracy Trials of 1915 and of one of the Martial Law Tribunals of 1919, I may, I think, claim to know something of the mentality of the Indian revolutionary. . . .

"Let our politicians bear ever in mind that it is utterly useless to endeavour to placate a snake. Gandhi and his friends should be deported."<sup>19</sup>



An interesting commentary on the functions of justice in India was made in 1931 by a judge of the High Court at Lahore, when Mr. Feroz Chand, the socialist editor of *The People* appealed against the decision of a local magistrate. When it was pointed out that the magistrate had refused to allow defence evidence or arguments and had assumed the role of prosecutor, the Judge replied: "*But that every magistrate in this country does, and has got to do.*"<sup>20</sup>

The effect of repression in 1932 was described by many English witnesses. Mr. C. F. Andrews in an article in the *India Review* described the state of terror he found in Bombay, and the rigid censorship of the Press. "Any report," he said, "however true, which brought the Government into contempt, would render the editor liable to imprisonment."<sup>21</sup> In the same paper the Rev. Magnus Ratter, who had returned from a sixteen-months' tour of India, commissioned by the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, gave a similar picture. The ordinances, he said, had "caused intense suffering while creating an even more bitter hatred." Mr. Verrier Elwin told of the parades of military force and aircraft, of *lathi* charges and innocent people shot by the police and military, of Red Cross volunteers and nurses beaten while rendering first aid, of unconscious men savagely kicked as they lay on the ground and of boys stripped and flogged in the open court. As to the censorship, he said: "Nobody can trust his newspaper."<sup>22</sup>

By a series of ordinances from January to July, 1932, many of which have since been embodied in statutory law, the powers assumed in the Bengal Ordinance of November, 1931, were applied throughout the greater part of British India with further refinements of tyranny. They were measures which "had they been directed against one small part of our own island, would have roused in Parliament and the country fierce opposition and passionate debate."<sup>23</sup> Even Sir John Maynard, a former Finance Minister of the Punjab Executive Council, said that "the Devil is loose again in India" and condemned the Government for driving India into the arms of "the extremists."<sup>24</sup>

Dr. Edmond Privat described India as existing "in

a state of siege." He found the country "like Russia under the Czars" and described the beating by British police of peaceful onlookers at Congress processions. The *lathis* used, he said, were metal-bound and "as big as a broomstick."<sup>25</sup> On the North-West Frontier Mr. Verrier Elwin investigated the violent repression of the Red Shirts, the Moslem mass organisation (affiliated to the Congress) which was organising the people in their struggle for independence. His report (which described among other things the surrounding of villages by police and the beating of leading men if they refused to disclose the names of Red Shirt leaders) was published in the *Free Press Journal* of Bombay.<sup>26</sup> Though some of the worst atrocities were omitted from this report, which no other paper had dared to publish, the editor of the *Free Press Journal* and his wife were arrested the following morning.

Even the *ex parte* "official" reports from the frontier were sufficiently grim. A statement by the Chief Commissioner issued from Peshawar on December 31st, 1931, announced the "apology" of 150 Red Shirts arrested in the Kohat District and spoke of a Red Shirt leader who "pulled down the Congress flag with his own hands." Similar official statements followed, all indicating either a miraculous conversion of the people or a state of terror. Villages where Congress meetings were held, where picketing was carried out, or from which pickets had been sent to Peshawar, were fined collectively under Section 26/1 of Ordinance 13.<sup>27</sup> Firing was admitted at Kohat, and among the casualties "most unfortunately a woman was accidentally killed by a stray bullet"; after which, apparently, the troops "met with a cordial reception. Villagers in the area readily admitted their error of the previous two days and asked for pardon."<sup>28</sup>

The *Daily Telegraph* special representative was soon able to report "a new spirit of dazed respect" on the frontier. "Unrest," he said, "lingers in the Peshawar area. . . .

But plentiful route marches and flag-showing and talks by the military with the villagers are rapidly correcting this situation."<sup>29</sup>

To implement the ferocious ordinances applied to Bengal, Sir John Anderson, of Black and Tan fame, was sent out as Governor.<sup>30</sup> Of this man, it is interesting to note, Mr. Harold Laski prophesied that "India will be glad of his coming." Mr. Laski saw in this administrator of a system modelled on fascism "a representative of a quality in British public life too little recognised by the man in the street."<sup>31</sup> About a year later a man who happened to be in the street during one of the frequent *lathi* charges in Calcutta, wrote to Sir John Anderson describing the police attack on the Forty-Seventh Session of the Indian National Congress. This observer—an American citizen—saw "several women struck quite fiercely over the shoulders, necks and backs" before he was driven from the spot by "an indiscriminate *lathi* charge."<sup>32</sup>

In some cases police excesses have been condemned by the magistrates.<sup>33</sup> An example of this was the assault by police, led by a British officer, on Professor Sayal and his students at the D.A.V. College, Lahore, in 1932. In this instance an unprovoked assault was made during the professor's lecture, and a successful action for damages was brought against the police. More often, however, there has been no redress. Under Anderson's administration in Bengal it was officially admitted by Mr. Prentice in the Legislative Council that a British police officer had struck a political prisoner while the latter was being taken *hand-cuffed* to jail. No action was taken against the officer and further information was refused in the Bengal Council.<sup>34</sup>

In the South, where Congress was supposed to have little support, repression was equally brutal. Mr. Peter Freeman described unprovoked attacks on peaceful demonstrations by police "armed with heavy *lathis*" who "beat mercilessly" and even attacked people already lying unconscious on the ground. The police, he said, were watched and encouraged by English sergeants.<sup>35</sup> Mr. Freeman's statements were automatically denied by the Government, but (as usual), an enquiry was refused. About the same time an English missionary, Dr. Forrester Paton, was assaulted by two British police sergeants in the streets of Madras because he was wearing Indian homespun cloth.<sup>36</sup> The

sergeants, having beaten him with *lathis*, called a water-cart and drenched him with green water from a hose-pipe. The following day he was arrested on fabricated charges, and a prosecution was commenced which the Government later withdrew for lack of any evidence.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike thousands of Indians who suffered in the same manner, Dr. Paton had a white skin, wealthy relations in Britain, and a brother-in-law who was a Member of Parliament. In a letter to Dr. Paton's brother-in-law (Sir James Duncan Miller, K.C., M.P.), Sir Samuel Hoare explained that "a mistake had been made."<sup>38</sup> It had indeed, for the police bullies little knew when they assaulted Dr. Paton that they had challenged money and power. Paton himself described Indian police methods as

"such that I am sure no crowd in an industrial centre in England or Scotland would stand without becoming violent."

The villagers, said Dr. Paton, "are cowed by fear; they are afraid to go into the town in homespun cloth."<sup>39</sup> When they were beaten it was *not* a mistake.

Another missionary—an American named Gordon Halstead—was ordered to leave India "in consequence of activities held to be harmful."<sup>40</sup> In Calcutta the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was fined nearly £400 for printing "an article by Professor George pointing out that the doctrine of non-violence had something to do with Christian principles."<sup>41</sup> Even the *ashrams*, where instruction in spinning and weaving had been given to the villagers, were raided by police and the looms destroyed. In her account of one of these *ashrams*, Miss Ellen Wilkinson recalls the contrast between this "scene of desolation" and a Parliament where members who had filed out during a discussion on India returned in force to discuss "a juicy scandal about the Post Office."<sup>42</sup>

No better account exists of repression in India in 1932 than the Report of the India League Delegation, a complete and well-documented survey which was published with a preface by Bertrand Russell.<sup>43</sup> One member of this delegation has recorded the extraordinary difficulties experi-

enced by them in obtaining this information—how the police arrested their messengers, stopped villagers from coming to see them, beat and dispersed crowds awaiting their visit and stood by them during interviews to intimidate witnesses.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile Sir Samuel Hoare, whose photograph had adorned the Press in various poses on the tennis court and the skating rink (what time he was too busy to meet Dr. Privat and others who had first-hand news of India) announced that “the only war between England and India was the cricket match.”<sup>45</sup>

In spite of the fact (among other instances) that a cable sent from India to Mr. Tom Williams, M.P., had been stopped by the Government,<sup>46</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare in a broadcast speech denied the existence of any censorship. Actually the censorship extended to the most minute details. The *Times of India* announced on December 17th, 1932, the banning of fourteen different films merely depicting such incidents as “Gandhi’s visit to Lancashire” and “The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in London.” At the British end the India Office, having been informed of a film entitled *The Cry of the World*,

“suggested that the scenes showing the Gandhi crowds in India being rushed by the police should be cut out. This the Fox Film Co. in London did.”<sup>47</sup>

No films, however, could have done justice to the actual events. Mr. Gordon Halstead, the American missionary mentioned above, has since described how in the United Provinces “women were raped, stripped naked and made to ‘frog parade’ through the streets.” In one village Mr. Halstead saw

“the swollen, bruised back of an old woman, who had been mercilessly beaten by armed police with the butt end of an army rifle for no more serious offence than that her son was a Congress worker.”<sup>48</sup>

To stifle news of such occurrences the Press Ordinances were used extensively. In 1935 alone seventy-two newspapers were prosecuted, and official figures given in the Legislative Assembly by the Home Member showed that

securities had been demanded and received from 166 newspapers between 1930 and 1935. Another 348 papers had failed to deposit securities and were obliged to cease publication. The complete loss of independence, reliability and morale among those papers which kept out of trouble must actually have been an even more terrible result of the ordinances.<sup>49</sup> In 1935 legislation to give permanent life to most of the emergency measures, after being twice rejected by the Legislative Assembly, was "certified" by the Viceroy.<sup>50</sup>

Even the Quetta earthquake was productive of atrocities. Writing from Muzaffarpur, Bihar, a Second Lieutenant of the East Yorks Regiment described with pride in an English paper how his regiment had cleared the roads

"by getting four men of the platoon to stop every native that comes along the road and making him work for ten minutes. It has been most effective. If they refuse to work a bayonet is stuck in them."<sup>51</sup>

For criticising such aspects of the Government's policy after the earthquake, fifteen newspapers were penalised and obliged to cease publication.<sup>52</sup>

Even a book by Maude Royden and various publications of the Workers' Educational Association were seized by the Bombay Customs officers from Mr. R. M. Masani, the Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, on his return from England.<sup>53</sup> The past year has been marked by a distinct tendency to renew the repressive régime of 1932, and numerous externments (especially of Socialist leaders) have taken place. Among those imprisoned without trial in Bengal two are officially reported to have committed suicide.<sup>54</sup> The general temper of the Government was aptly illustrated by the case of Mr. Subhas Bose, who had been released on account of his health, after long detention without trial, on condition that he went abroad. Mr. Bose was forbidden to come to England; and when, on his recovery, he proposed to return to his native land, he was officially informed that he would be re-arrested on arrival.<sup>55</sup> Mr. Bose disregarded this warning and the Government proved as good as its word.

It must not be imagined that repression under the National Government is any worse than it was under the Labour Government which preceded it. There has been no fundamental change in policy, and nothing could be more untrue than Mr. Laski's assertion that: "It is plain to every observer that the whole spirit of the administration has changed."<sup>56</sup> When Sir Samuel Hoare was challenged regarding repression he was able to reply without contradiction from the Labour benches that:

' "Tyranny must have been twice as bad when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Lansbury) was a member of the Cabinet, because under the late Government there were twice as many men and women imprisoned."<sup>57</sup>

The only essential difference between the two administrations was in the extent of publicity which was given in England to repressive measures.<sup>58</sup> It is in keeping with the self-dramatisation of a popular working-class party that it should, when in opposition, protest against the tyrannies of capitalism; but it is not in keeping with the policy of openly capitalist parties that they should protest when working-class leaders act as their instruments. Hence the effect of a Labour Government upon British imperialism is that criticism from the Labour Press is silenced, and apart from extreme left-wing criticism no voice is raised to expose the brutal facts.

Repressive measures under the Labour Party's administration included the Bengal Ordinance for imprisonment without trial,<sup>59</sup> an Indian Press Ordinance (which was the model of all later measures of this character<sup>60</sup>) and an Unlawful Association Ordinance "for the forfeiture of movable property used for the purpose of any association declared to be unlawful."<sup>61</sup> Ordinance No. V of 1930 made the picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops illegal, even where no force was used; while Ordinance No. VI expressed the Labour Government's common interest with the Indian landlords by making it illegal to instigate the refusal of rents.

Martial Law regulations promulgated at Sholapur in 1930 included a prohibition of "the Congress or so-called

National Flag or a similar emblem.”<sup>62</sup> Anyone disobeying this order or committing any act “likely to be interpreted or meaning that the person is performing or intending to perform any duty or duties normally performed by persons appointed by constituted authority, himself not being appointed for the performance of that duty,” was liable to *ten years’ rigorous imprisonment and fine*.

Disobedience to Curfew Orders was made punishable by three years’ imprisonment; participation in “assemblies” of more than five persons by five years’ rigorous imprisonment.<sup>63</sup> But the most disgraceful measure sanctioned was Regulation VI, which stated that anyone who:

- “(a) sees or comes into contact with persons who are actively engaged in the present or recent disorders;
- (b) comes to a knowledge of the whereabouts or of the gatherings or the intended movements of such persons, or
- (c) *who knows or has reasonable belief that any of his relatives or dependents have joined or are about to join such persons*, shall without delay give full information thereof to the nearest military or civil authorities.”<sup>64</sup>

The maximum punishment for a refusal to betray one’s relations in this manner was five years’ rigorous imprisonment and fine. Numerous sentences were officially recorded under these regulations, including a sentence of seven years’ imprisonment and Rs. 3,000 fine for carrying the national flag.<sup>65</sup> For offences under Regulations VI, VIII, XI (the National Flag Regulation) and XIII, four boys of fifteen were flogged, one receiving ten strokes with a rattan cane, two receiving fifteen strokes, and one receiving fifteen strokes with a birch.<sup>66</sup>

As in 1932, films were banned.<sup>67</sup> “To believe,” wrote the *Daily Express* correspondent, “that the Government of India have not suppressed the illegal activities of Gandhi’s congress committees or war councils with a ruthless and relentless hand is indeed to be deluded by a fallacy.” The *Morning Post* told how 275 people were injured in a single charge by the police on an unresisting crowd in Bombay. This account records how the Congress volunteers,



headed by their leaders and forty women, "sat in the road all night in wet, mud-splashed clothes," when their procession was stopped by the police. In the morning they were ordered to disperse, which they refused to do, and the police (by order of the Commissioner) "made a vigorous *lathi* charge."<sup>68</sup>

Even the *Daily Herald* for a time published some illuminating despatches, thanks to its courageous correspondent, Mr. George Slöcombe.<sup>69</sup> On June 23rd, 1930, this paper gave an account of "Black Saturday" in Bombay, when 500 people, including women, were injured by the police. It is not remarkable that the police found it necessary to smash the cameras of Indian journalists, or that the Government should have issued blatantly false reports by its official doctors regarding injuries.

Mr. Brailsford in *Rebel India* dealt with the less official brutalities of Lord Irwin's régime. He writes of the punitive police, "an armed emergency force carrying rifles." These men, he said, "have no numbers . . . one cannot identify a man who misbehaves." Under the Labour Government such men were let loose upon the villages, and Brailsford examined the injuries of men and women from *lathis* and the butt ends of rifles. They were "beaten indiscriminately," writes Brailsford, "often in the official's presence."<sup>70</sup>

The same writer has described the lock-up for unconvicted persons at Borsad—"a cage with a front of iron bars like a den at the zoo"—where eighteen political prisoners awaited trial in a space about thirty feet square. According to the warder with whom Mr. Brailsford spoke, one prisoner had been there for six weeks.<sup>71</sup>

"Again and again," wrote Brailsford, "I heard descriptions by Europeans of the beating of slight and passive youths by sturdy constables which made one feel physically sick." For reporting such events the Indian papers were penalized under Irwin's Press Ordinance, and a number of papers were obliged to cease publication or chose to do so rather than continue an ignominious existence by reporting only official lies and platitudes.<sup>72</sup> The censorship of press telegrams to destinations abroad was so serious that an American newspaper proprietor complained of it.

"The censorship," he said, "has led Americans to suspect that, when two persons are reported as killed, the truth is that twenty are killed and the hospitals full."<sup>73</sup>

The American public was not far wrong in its estimate. Meanwhile, Mr. Wedgwood Benn (who had sanctioned every atrocity and endorsed the Press Ordinance) complained of the "malicious and alarmist rumours" which were the direct and inevitable result of his policy.

In individual cases there is little doubt that the Labour Party proved its ability to govern as well as any previous imperialist government. An *Associated Press* cable of October 24th, 1930, told of the arrest of a boy of ten at Lahore (the son of the editor of the *Daily Milap*) for delivering a seditious speech. Another boy, fourteen years old, was given three months' hard labour for picketing in Calcutta on November 25th. For the same offence at Lahore on November 10th a boy of twelve was sent to the Delhi Reformatory School for four years, while another boy of twelve or thirteen was sent to the reformatory for five years. He had endangered Mr. Wedgwood Benn's empire by standing in front of a foreign cloth shop and trying to persuade people not to enter. In Bombay alone thirty-one children were convicted in 1930 of such offences as picketing, selling proscribed literature, breaking the Salt Act and being members of an unlawful association.

The shooting at Peshawar was among the achievements of this period.<sup>74</sup> The City Magistrate himself admitted before the Government Commission which enquired into this massacre that the crowd on April 23rd was perfectly peaceful until two men were run over by an armoured car which attempted to push its way through. Every effort was made to conceal the number of persons killed by the soldiers, but on a careful estimate compiled by a non-official (Congress) Committee it appears to have been at least 125.<sup>75</sup> It was on this occasion that two platoons of the Royal Garhwali Rifles refused to fire. Mr. Ashmead Bartlett, in reporting the Garhwali mutiny, expressed the greatest alarm; and the *Daily Telegraph*, in publishing his report, noted that it had been delayed "presumably by censorship."<sup>76</sup>

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But the Labour Party was equal to the emergency. "The Home Government," wrote the political correspondent of the *Telegraph*, "are prepared to back up to the fullest extent any action, however firm in character, that the Government of India may deem it necessary to take."<sup>77</sup> These men who had refused to fire on their unarmed fellow-countrymen were condemned to savage sentences—one to life imprisonment, one to fifteen years, two to ten years and thirteen others to terms ranging from two to eight years. In Parliament the Independent Labour Party appealed in vain to the Labour Government to quash or reduce these sentences.<sup>78</sup>

Of the Peshawar shooting a British officer said: "We taught the blighters a lesson. . . . Our fellows stood there shooting down the agitators and leaders who were pointed out to them by the police. . . . It was a case of continuous shooting."<sup>79</sup> Of a similar affair at Sholapur a young English soldier told Mr. Verrier Elwin: "My Gawd, sir, our fellows didn't half torture them natives. They stripped 'em naked and burnt 'em all over with lighted cigarettes till they shouted like blue ruin. And they cracked open their heads as soon as look at you."<sup>80</sup>

Reference has already been made to the legalised terrorism of Martial Law in Sholapur. The unofficial barbarism which flourished under its protection was even worse. On May 8th, 1930, the police drove through the town in lorries, shooting at random in all directions. The reason for this was a rumour, later denied officially by the Government, that two policemen had been thrown into a well and that others had been blinded or burnt alive.<sup>81</sup> In the police reprisal for these fictitious atrocities, eighteen persons were killed, their names and addresses with full details being published at considerable risk in some of the Indian papers. In most cases the victims were in their own houses, often in upper rooms. One instance was the killing of a boy of fourteen who was standing at the window on the second floor of a house. The boy's uncle communicated with the District Magistrate of Sholapur (Mr. H. G. Knight)<sup>82</sup> who assured him of his "regret."<sup>83</sup>

Another boy of fourteen who was killed on this occasion

was the son of Mr. G. K. Ranade, Assistant Superintendent of the Jain Boarding House. In this instance an official enquiry was held at which it was concluded that the boy had been shot by the Head Constable, whose gun was accidentally discharged owing to the jerking of the motor-bus in which he was sitting. No proceedings were taken against the Head Constable and no general enquiry into the whole murderous onslaught was permitted, but Mr. Knight once more placed his "deep sympathy" on record. By way of contrast, savage sentences were carried out against those who were supposed to have used violence against the police or military, even where the gravest doubt existed as to their guilt.<sup>84</sup>

The order against wearing "Gandhi caps" in Sholapur was officially denied by Mr. Wedgwood Benn,<sup>85</sup> although Reuter had already reported on May 15th, 1930, that:

"Lorry-loads of men of the 2nd Ulster Rifles are parading the streets armed with thin sticks with a hooked end, with which they lift off the white linen Gandhi caps."

Shortly after this Major C. R. Turner, in the *Poona Star* of May 22nd, boasted openly of "making Gandhi caps illegal" and Mr. Benn was obliged to admit that his denial was false.<sup>86</sup> In July Mr. Benn informed Mr. Brockway in the House of Commons that the cap was not to his knowledge prohibited in any other part of India, and Mr. Brockway promptly produced in reply an "Order under Section 144 C.P.C." prohibiting the Gandhi cap in Guntur district, Madras.<sup>87</sup>

Whilst Mr. Benn thus exposed his own "ignorance," he took every possible precaution against others discovering the things of which he had "no knowledge." Public official enquiries, demanded after each successive outrage, were almost regularly refused, and independent enquiries were prohibited.<sup>88</sup> In one of the few exceptions to this rule, when the police raided Dacca University, an enquiry was held by the University authorities which the Government allowed to proceed.<sup>89</sup> On this occasion the indiscriminate beating of the students had resulted in the death of one unfortunate youth,<sup>90</sup> and the Committee appointed by

the University in its report condemned the action of the police as an unjustifiable assault made without warning.<sup>91</sup>

By October, 1930, India had been made safe once more for British capitalism. The *Star* of October 15th reported that the Bombay police had raided Congress organisations "and practically wiped out the Congress" whilst in London the same day financiers had in one hour over-subscribed a £12,000,000 India loan. That it was a popular movement which had been crushed few pretended to deny.<sup>92</sup> The Punjab Governor at a Police Parade on October 23rd described the Congress campaign as continuous and widespread, and similar statements were officially made in other parts of the country.<sup>93</sup> Official figures showed that up to the end of December 54,000 people had been convicted in connection with Civil Disobedience, and that during the four months from the beginning of April to the end of July there had been 528 casualties among the public from firing, of which 101 cases had been fatal.<sup>94</sup> The number of deaths was probably two or three times as large as the official estimate.

In many cases whole villages or districts were punished by collective fines or by the quartering of punitive police on the inhabitants at their cost.<sup>95</sup> Punitive police were quartered on part of Dacca in October, 1930, and on three villages in Monghyr (Bihar and Orissa) in November, also in the Sind Valley and in Seoni district.<sup>96</sup> This method of breaking the spirit of the people proved so successful that it was adopted by the National Government, which applied it with equally good effect. For the 6,189 official whippings inflicted in 1931 the Labour Government and its successor must share the credit.

On the North-West Frontier even stranger methods of coercion were used. Under Section 15 of the Martial Law Ordinance four villagers of Mattani were sentenced to fines of ten rupees, or one month's imprisonment in default, for neglecting to cut their crops! A tribesman who attempted to kill Captain Barnes, Assistant Commissioner at Charsadda (Peshawar), was summarily tried *in camera*, condemned to death and hanged, though it was admitted in the Legislative Assembly that Captain Barnes was unhurt.<sup>97</sup>

Numerous cases were reported from all parts of the country in which men who had served their terms of imprisonment were promptly re-arrested and (in default of "furnishing security") were thrown back into jail. In one instance on record Mr. T. Krishnaswami of Salem (Madras) was sentenced to a year's imprisonment on January 22nd, 1931, for "offences" committed years previously. The first two charges exhibited against him were that he had led a batch of volunteers to the Indian National Congress in 1927, and that he organised a boycott of the Simon Commission in 1928.

As in 1932, Europeans associating with Indian nationalists were liable to share their fate. Mr. R. R. Keithahn, an American missionary living at Madura, was warned of official displeasure because he dressed in *Khadi*, though he adhered strictly to political neutrality.<sup>98</sup> Eventually he was expelled from the country for the crime of giving a night's lodging to the present author. In this district Collector Hall actually sent out "requests" to missionaries that they should uphold the Government and speak against the Congress at every opportunity; and at least one Danish missionary was reported to have resigned in consequence.

One of the worst crimes of the Labour Government was the Meerut prosecution. In a pamphlet published later by the National Joint Council of the Trade Union Congress, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party it was stated that:

"The whole proceedings from beginning to end are utterly indefensible, and constitute something in the nature of a judicial scandal."<sup>99</sup>

Yet this case continued throughout the Labour Government's term of office, and Dr. Drummond Shiels expressly stated that the Labour Government accepted its responsibility.<sup>100</sup> Speaking at the Labour Party Conference at Brighton in 1929 Dr. Shiels defended this "judicial scandal" on behalf of his government. There was no question of that "ignorance," which Labour leaders so often pleaded later as their excuse, for Dr. Shiels said:

"We have gone very carefully into all these questions, and we believe that the procedure which has been adopted is justified and is not unfair to the accused."<sup>101</sup>

Four years later, when public opinion, thanks to the tireless efforts of a small number of individuals in England, had been directed to the real iniquity of this trial, the Labour Party came forward as the champion of those whom they had prosecuted. In the pamphlet quoted above they denounced the procedure which Dr. Shiels had defended—the removal of the accused from all parts of the country in order that they might be tried at Meerut without a jury. But there is no mention in this pamphlet, or in Citrine's foreword, of the Labour Government's responsibility and the Party's previous endorsement of Dr. Shiels' attitude.

Dr. Shiels blamed the accused for the extraordinary length of the trial. The Transport House publication of 1933 blames the prosecution. Hannen Swaffer in the *Daily Herald* of April 5th, 1933, compared the treatment of the Meerut prisoners to Hitler's rule in Germany; but in 1930 the *Herald* had nothing but praise for the administration which was conducting this prosecution.<sup>102</sup> On August 9th, 1933, the *Labour Press Service* went even further, for the prisoners whom the Labour Government had prosecuted for two years had now become "these men, against whom no concrete charge has ever been brought." They were now "victims of political persecution." This, however, was after the Court of Appeal had modified the savage sentences; for capitalist law, like the Labour leaders, knows when to give way to public opinion.

This trial lasted nearly four and a half years and cost the Indian taxpayer about £120,000. It was condemned eventually even by the Liberal press, so that the tardy protests of the Labour leaders have little significance.<sup>103</sup> Mr. Harold Laski, a member of the Labour Party, later stated that "proper facilities for the organisation of their defence were withheld from the accused from the outset."<sup>104</sup> Bail was refused to all the prisoners with one exception. Mr. Brailsford has given us a grim picture of a day in the

dreary proceedings during which the Crown Prosecutor (who was earning about £78 per day) "sat and earned it with silent dignity," while the judge made random notes on a typewriter.<sup>105</sup> These were the only records of a trial which cost thirty men over four years of their lives in addition to the sentences imposed on all but three of them.

These events occurred under the administration of a Government whose members were about to celebrate the centenary of the Tolpuddle martyrs. Those who acted as the instruments of British capital in an attempt to crush the pioneers of militant trade unionism in India were in 1934 to pollute the memory of the "six men of Dorset" by hailing them as members of their own Pharisaic fraternity, and the spiritual ancestors of Sir Walter Citrine. Nothing could have brought more sharply into contrast the professions and practices of the reformist leaders.

A similar contrast may be observed between the Labour Party's attitude to Hitlerism in Germany and its defence of almost identical methods in the British Empire. "Democracy versus Dictatorship" became the familiar slogan of those who had wielded dictatorial power and crushed not only every attempt to establish democratic institutions in India but even the limited freedom afforded by statutory law.<sup>106</sup> A ban on German goods<sup>107</sup> was officially urged by Transport House only a few years after the Labour leaders had sanctioned the wholesale imprisonment of Indians for picketing shops which were selling British cloth. The indignation of the Labour press with regard to the Incitement to Disaffection Bill in 1934 must also have caused many a bitter smile in Bengal when the infinitely worse tyranny of Irwin's ordinances was compared with this attack on British "democracy."

On one occasion Mr. Brockway drew attention to the number of prosecutions under Section 124a of the Indian Penal Code, for actions bringing the Government into "hatred and contempt." Might not, he asked, such a charge have been made against Ministers of the House of Commons when they were themselves in opposition? Mr. Benn, as usual, evaded the question. That it was "rather a wider question than the one on the paper" was his only reply.<sup>108</sup>



At a later date, particularly in a speech at the Labour Party Conference in 1932, Mr. Benn came to dramatise himself as "a man standing alone with a bureaucracy 5,000 miles away . . . who strove earnestly and fearlessly to carry out the programme of emancipation." In office, however, his tone was different.

"We do not shelter behind the Viceroy," he told the House. "He offered advice and we were free to reject it. We did not reject it, because it agreed with our own convictions."<sup>109</sup>

The result of this concord between the Labour Government and its Conservative Viceroy was the policy which we have examined, described by Mr. Benn as "the patient efforts made to create a peaceful atmosphere."<sup>110</sup> The peaceful atmosphere was created in India by battering the nationalist movement into temporary submission; and before its fall the Labour Government took considerable credit for the release of some of the prisoners incarcerated under its own régime. But it was only in Parliament that real concord was established, for there the deeds that would have been denounced by the Labour Party at any time up to 1924 were applauded or accepted in silence by almost the entire House.<sup>111</sup>

The position of the Labour Party with regard to imperialism is the most important thing to understand in considering the future of India, the colonies and Great Britain. A study of past and present policy will reveal that fundamentally the Labour leadership acts upon the same principles as the older capitalist parties, and that the only difference to be found has its roots in two styles of demagoguery adapted to the two principal classes of the British electorate.

We may now sum up the fundamental postulates of imperialism as practised in India by all parties which have as yet held office in Britain. It is, in the first place, an autocratic system, based upon the denial of elementary democratic rights to the great majority of India's three hundred and fifty millions; and the Labour Party has made itself the instrument of this system just as Hitler is the instrument of German Fascism.

This applies equally to the new constitution. Apart from the special representation of the princes, the new legislatures will only enfranchise 14 per cent of the people in the Provincial electorates and even less in the Federal voting list.<sup>112</sup> Special powers will still be retained by the Viceroy and Provincial Governors, including the control of the Army and of Foreign Relations, together with whatever portion of the budget may be required for these and other purposes, including the payment of debts and the upkeep of the Christian Church.<sup>113</sup>

In addition there will be, as in the past, unlimited powers whereby the whole constitution can be nullified. The British autocrats may veto legislation or pass "Governor's Acts" without consent of the Councils, or issue ordinances having all the force of law. The salaries and pensions of these autocrats and of the "covenanted" services are all guaranteed; and Indian ministers will have to work as before with colleagues and even "subordinates" whom no decision of the legislatures can remove.

"These are no paper safeguards," Sir Samuel Hoare proudly told the House of Commons.<sup>114</sup> On the one hand the constitution, in Colonel Wedgwood's words, will place the Indian people "in the hands of a seventeenth century autocracy" of princes and landlords.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, British interests will be even more securely entrenched than before.

"The British Government," writes a financial expert, "has at various times solemnly declared through Labour and Conservative Secretaries of State, that it will not allow a condition of affairs to develop in India which would endanger the credit and stability of the Indian Government."<sup>116</sup>

This writer noted with satisfaction the dictatorial powers of the Viceroy. "If the Governor-General does not consider a budget satisfactory he can impose whatever taxation he deems to be necessary without consulting his Parliament." England once cut off a King's head to decide upon that point.

"Toreador," in the financial columns of the *New*

*Statesman & Nation*, gloats over the same facts. He reminds holders of India Government loans that their dividends are guaranteed by the special powers of the Viceroy: "In other words the Indian politician or agitator will not be able to assail the security of the Government loans." Among the attractive investments recommended by "Toreador" were 4 per cent Indian Railway debentures. "In each case," he comments, "the interest is guaranteed by the Secretary of State for India."<sup>117</sup>

In the Parliamentary debates on India between 1930 and 1935 it was clear that the only divergence of opinion between the "Die-hards" and the various Governments was as to which was the safest way to protect British interests. A Conservative summed up the case for "reform" with the warning that: "the dangers of going back in this matter were far greater than the risks of going forward."<sup>118</sup> Hence came the overwhelming defeat of Churchill by his Conservative colleagues. Lord Zetland put the matter bluntly in commercial terms:

"You cannot compel Indians to buy British goods if they are determined not to do so."<sup>119</sup>

In plain language, the boycott had succeeded in spite of the most vigorous attempt to suppress it; and the remaining hope of administering India profitably was to widen the circle of Indian propertied interests which would support British rule and British trade in exchange for concessions on our part. But the control of the armed forces and their complete subordination to Whitehall will ensure that the "special powers" of the Viceroy and the Governors will be no nominal powers such as those exercised by the monarchy in the British constitution.<sup>120</sup> Again and again Sir Samuel Hoare rightly assured the Tory Die-hards that his proposals were as reactionary as anything they could desire.

The first instalment of this new constitution will be "Provincial Autonomy," which will come into force on April 1st, 1937—a singularly appropriate date. In the elections, which are to precede this great occasion, every precaution has been taken to secure a victory for reaction-

ary interests. Not only is the franchise, as we have noted, severely limited, but the inadequate number of polling booths will cut off poorer voters from their voting rights by necessitating long country journeys on foot. The British bureaucracy is also exerting its influence to secure support for "loyalist" candidates<sup>121</sup>—an interesting contrast to the position of the Civil Service in Britain, which is supposed to be "non-political." Finally, numerous candidates are being disqualified by the Government on the grounds that they are ex-prisoners—that is to say, former participants in Civil Disobedience. Election meetings and conferences held at the end of 1936 were already being banned in many cases where the candidates were known to be "extremists," while restrictions have been placed on the movements of left-wing speakers, who have been further threatened with prosecution for "sedition" in their election speeches.

Such are the reforms which *Foreign Affairs* described as "The End of Empire in India," and compared to the granting of self-government to Canada.<sup>122</sup> But the more the system changes, the more it remains itself. Labour, once more, is as clear on this point as any capitalist party. The Labour minority which tabled its alternative plans when the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform reported in 1934 made this very clear.<sup>123</sup> Being in opposition, they made the usual show of championing the poor and the oppressed; but they agreed in principle to the continuation of British Rule through the Viceroy and Provincial Governors, controlling "reserved subjects such as defence." The powers of intervention vested in these officials were to be "restricted," but Indian independence is not mentioned in this minority report; and even Dominion Status is regarded as something which India is not yet to be allowed because the democratic Labour Party do not consider Indians as yet "fit" for it.

It would be difficult to find an argument more insincere than this, when put forward by a working-class party which has frequently had to meet the criticism that Labour is "unfit to govern," and has upheld in Britain the democratic right of the people to be their own judges as to their

"fitness" in this matter.<sup>124</sup> But there was further insincerity in the fact that even the Labour amendments were only oppositional gestures in direct conflict with the whole policy of the party when in office. When in 1933 the India White Paper was carried, the leader of the opposition (Mr. Lansbury) "paid a tribute to Lord Irwin and to Mr. Wedgwood Benn," remarking that:

"It was true they had been obliged to suppress free speech and to imprison people, but they had kept steadily in mind the end of self-government at which they were aiming."<sup>125</sup>

Apart from the fact that the Labour Party considered itself "obliged" to take much more brutal measures than Mr. Lansbury indicated, there is no shred of evidence that their ultimate intentions were any more liberal than those of the Conservatives.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, Mr. MacDonald (who at that time enjoyed their confidence as Premier) was never tired of reiterating that India was not a party question, and he consistently refused any assurance, either public or private, as to the extent of the "reforms" which his government was prepared to support. The Labour Party organised a Round Table Conference as free as a Nazi election; and not until every popular movement in India had been crushed did they release their prisoners to meet them on their own dictated terms.<sup>127</sup>

And yet, in this same speech of Lansbury's, he compares the peace of repression to "death," as though his own government had not dealt as much death of this description as any of its predecessors or successors. They had indeed done more; for they had defended the frontiers of their empire by the usual methods—a fact of which Lansbury was later reminded and for which he duly repented. On this occasion Mr. Lansbury even went so far as to say of Gandhi (whom he had helped put in prison) that his was "the sort of resistance I believe in,"<sup>128</sup> though he did not explain how he reconciled his change of heart with continued support for the mandates system of pooled imperialism.

The bombardment of the Frontier tribes under the second Labour Government was vividly described in

*The Times* of June 4th, 1930, which makes it perfectly clear that the "customary warning" so frequently referred to on these occasions was not given in at least one instance.

"To-day's bombardment," wrote the *Times* correspondent, "has been kept a strict secret, and the first shells must have been an unpleasant surprise. . . . The firing was extraordinarily accurate, and the gunners, picking up the range from the beginning, dropped their shells right into the mouth of the dark cleft which marks the western end of the caves.<sup>120</sup> The Royal Air Force now joined the party. Aeroplanes appeared in the distant sky, and the sharper crack of bombs mingled with the dull explosion of shells."

At its Annual Conference in October, 1935, the Labour Party spent a day and a half condemning Italian imperialism in Abyssinia. At that very time the British attempt to drive a military road through the Mohmand territory on the North-West Frontier had led to a war similar in origin to the Abyssinian War. In each case there had been "incidents"; and the British, like the Italians, claimed to be "policing" a troublesome and uncivilised neighbour. Moreover, the Mohmands, like the Abyssinians, were accused of harbouring "undesirable" refugees and agitators. But there were also important differences, for the Mohmands were few and ill-armed compared with the Abyssinians. They had also the misfortune not to be represented at the League of Nations. But their worst crime was that they were opposed to being bombed by the British, which was clearly quite a different matter from being murdered by the Italians.

Hence it came about that the Labour Party at their Conference, perhaps a little embarrassed by their own past, found themselves unable to spend five minutes on a resolution condemning their own Government for the crime they so loudly denounced in Mussolini.<sup>130</sup> The Executive strongly opposed any such resolution, though warned by Mr. M. R. Masani, who was at that time in England (representing the Congress Socialist Party) that

"It will be difficult for Socialists in India and elsewhere to believe that the British Labour Party detests

the Imperialism of its own Government as strongly as it does that of a foreign nation like Italy."

The fears of the Indian Socialists proved to be justified. An aggressive war which had been condemned even by the Indian Legislative Assembly was condoned by the silence of British Labour.<sup>131</sup> But no one who had followed the party's record could have expected anything else. A letter addressed to Mr. Lansbury by thirty-seven Indians in London claimed that during the second Labour Government approximately 4,000 human lives were destroyed by the armed forces in India in defence of British capitalism.

Indeed, the record of the Labour Party is especially illuminating with respect to the ethics of aerial bombardment. Mr. Leach, then Labour Under-Secretary for Air, in his Official Report of July 3rd, 1924, energetically defended the bombing of tribesmen in Irak. Lord Thomson, the Labour Air Minister, went even further in his enthusiasm.<sup>132</sup> The years 1929-31 witnessed a repetition of aerial bombardment by a Labour Government on an even wider scale than before. Yet Mr. Leach was able to write a few years later (for the benefit of his local supporters) that "Bombing aeroplanes are never used for anything except barbarous and inhuman purposes."<sup>133</sup>

The crushing of a rebellion in Burma was another of the exploits of the second Labour Government. The official report on this rebellion tells of about 1,000 persons killed, of villagers deported for "sympathising" with the rebels, of pardons and rewards offered for treachery to rebel leaders. Among the causes of the revolt the report refers blandly to the fall in prices, which had the same effect as that already noted in India.<sup>134</sup> Photographic evidence was later sent to the Secretary of State for India showing the public exhibition of the heads of sixteen decapitated rebel leaders.<sup>135</sup>

It is therefore not remarkable that Viscount Cecil, the Conservative politician chosen by the Labour Government to represent it at Geneva, should have tabled an amendment at the Preparatory Commission for the World Disarmament Conference which

"would permit any signatory to the Convention to increase its armed forces if faced with organised rebellion."

In explaining this amendment Lord Cecil stated that any country faced with such a situation as Britain faced in India must retain power to deal with a movement "which might threaten the nation's very existence."<sup>136</sup>

In vain Mr. Brailsford wished "that the coming to power of a Labour Government at Westminster had in any way eased the task of its comrades who are struggling to better the lot of the Indian worker." He saw too clearly that

"Nothing in these two years has changed in the spirit and methods of the Indian administration. It rules, as it always did, in the interests of capital."<sup>137</sup>

As Hyndman said of administrative acts in the early nineteenth century, Irwin's measures "read like edicts of the Egyptians against the Jews." The Finance Act of 1931, having been rejected by the Legislative Assembly, was "certified" by Irwin's fiat in a statement which out-Hitlered Hitler; and Wedgwood Benn telegraphed his approval.<sup>138</sup> Edward Frederick Lindley, Baron Irwin, was thus able to defy 350,000,000 people and the Parliament which was supposed to represent them, passing by decree the legislation which they had rejected, with the full support of British "socialists."

We have observed in the previous chapter that under Irwin's régime tariff preferences for British goods were forced upon the Indian public, though Benn had previously opposed the principle of imperial preference.<sup>139</sup> Continually this champion of working-class rights re-assured the capitalists that "His Majesty's Government have no intention of allowing a state of things to arise in India in which repudiation of debt could become a practical possibility."<sup>140</sup> Indeed, the Labour Party went further than this; for in 1932 Major Attlee on its behalf endorsed a Government proposal to burden India with charges amounting to £13,600,000 in connection with the Great War. This sum, which had been provisionally charged to India in addition to the "War Gift" already referred to,<sup>141</sup>



was charged finally to India by a resolution of the House of Commons. The resolution, moved by Sir Samuel Hoare, stated that "the Government of India are desirous of bearing finally such further extraordinary charges"; and Attlee, who was the only Labour member to speak to the resolution, "thought the settlement was a fair one."<sup>142</sup>

In face of such overwhelming evidence it is ridiculous to assume that the Labour leaders have been unwilling partners in imperialist exploitation. No necessity compelled them to take office in a minority government where they could only be the instruments of a capitalist system which they professed to abhor. But their conduct on numerous occasions when in opposition makes it clear that even a Labour Government with a majority could be relied upon to continue the autocratic rule over India and the colonies together with the economic exploitation which that autocracy exists to protect.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, many of these leaders boast openly of their pride in this system.<sup>144</sup>

The plain facts with regard to the Labour Party are that it assumed the "right" of Britain to rule India and to determine India's future destiny, and that it acted throughout on those assumptions. In order to carry out its autocratic programme it entered actively into co-operation with capitalist parties and the imperialist bureaucracy in India. Even so, it could have stopped such outrages as the Meerut Case, just as the 1924 Government stopped the Campbell Case in England; but on every issue it chose to be the willing instrument of a repression which, by most Indian accounts, was worse than that of the Tories in 1932.<sup>145</sup> The Labour leaders were not ignorant of this repression, for they endorsed the necessary measures; and if they did not even take the trouble to read the ordinances which they sanctioned, the case against them is all the more serious. Indeed, there can be no excuse for those who claim and exercise a right to govern others and admit their own ignorance as to what is being done in their name.

In addition to this the two Labour Governments used all their influence to prevent the truth from being known—notably in the Patiala affair, for which Irwin and Benn must bear primary responsibility. In this country not only

did the Labour Press consistently misrepresent the Indian situation in order to save the face of the Government,<sup>146</sup> but a packed conference of Indian princes, landlords and other friends of the Government was convened in order to mislead public opinion. The net effect of this policy was to embitter many Indian workers with a hatred for the workers of Britain, whom they naturally felt to be responsible for the situation. Those who have talked most of democracy and of unity have shown their contempt for both; they have vastly increased the existing cleavage between the relatively privileged workers of the West and the bottom dogs of economic imperialism.<sup>147</sup>

It was little consolation to the Indian worker to know that he was bludgeoned or shot by the orders of his British "comrades" for his own good, and that British socialists moved in a mysterious way their blunders to perform. Nor did the victims of Peshawar and Sholapur find much solace in the reiterated eulogies of Lord Irwin. He may have been all that he was called—a good man and a Christian Viceroy. "So were they all, all honourable men," like the kings of the Gentiles, who were also called Benefactors. The Labour leaders may have meant well, as many capitalist rulers before them; but a well meaning slave-owner is still a slave-owner, and in some respects more loathsome than a bad one. Under their rule the rights of Indians were the rights allowed to a dog, who is a good dog if he obeys but a bad dog if he has a mind of his own. Like Mr. Benn's dog, if he has one, Indians were allowed as much freedom as he chose to give them; and most people would have given a dog more, whilst the law would not allow them to starve it.<sup>148</sup>

Mr. Brailsford has recorded his disgust on comparing a copy of *Young India* (secretly cyclostyled, because the press had been confiscated) with "a London penny paper." One paper dealt with the arrest of hundreds of men and women who were struggling for the freedom of India. The other was full of racing tips, murder mysteries, an Atlantic yacht race and pictures of ladies in bathing costumes.<sup>149</sup> One was the organ of the people who were unfit to govern themselves: the other was the organ of

the Superior Race, and showed how much they knew or cared. On a previous occasion Mr. Brailsford admitted that the paper of which he spoke was the *Daily Herald*.<sup>150</sup> So fatuous was this paper's treatment of the Indian situation that two days after the first shooting at Peshawar, when the whole of India was awakening and men were facing death in the struggle for independence, it "attributed the profound discontent all over India to the long waiting for the Simon Commission's report."<sup>151</sup>

The factors that will determine any real socialist policy with regard to imperialism may be summed up in four points. Firstly the colonial and semi-colonial workers and peasants form, in the aggregate, the majority among the exploited classes.<sup>152</sup> Secondly, they are the most exploited and the most oppressed. Thirdly, the struggle for the "right" to exploit them is the principal cause of War; and fourthly the imperialist system divides them in interest and sympathy from the more privileged workers of the Western countries. All these facts indicate that the struggle against imperialism should be made, not simply an aspect of socialist activity, but a basic point of policy in every imperialist country. In Britain, particularly, any hesitancy on this point will produce another display of Labour imperialism which may discredit the British working class irrevocably in the eyes of the Indian and colonial workers.

This is the worst danger that attaches to a possible "Popular Front" Government in Britain.<sup>153</sup> The ostensible object of such a front would be to "defend democracy"; yet no one imagines that it would do anything of the sort. It would defend Parliamentaryism in Britain, and possibly the political rights of 46,000,000 people in the United Kingdom: but at the same time and with equal energy it would defend in India a system which is the antithesis of democracy. In short, in order to preserve limited rights for themselves, the British workers would be supporting the enslavement of a population about eight times as numerous. This is precisely the principle which the socialist denounces in the capitalist system, which preserves the "rights" of privileged classes at the cost of the masses.<sup>154</sup>

Nevertheless there is little doubt that, if war does not

overtake us first,<sup>155</sup> the future will produce some such coalition of Liberal and Labour Reformist forces and that their banners will receive the blessings of Moscow. There is therefore little immediate purpose in devising schemes for the abandonment of the colonial empire, in view of the fact that no party exists in Britain having both the will and the power to put such plans into operation. For the moment the struggle against imperialism in Britain itself is narrowed down to the functions of an auxiliary force working in conjunction with a main contingent. And that main contingent is made up of the forces of revolution in the colonial countries themselves.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The Man on the Spot" is, of course, always an Englishman or an Indian official. There are also 350,000,000 Indians on the spot; but unlike the toad beneath the harrow, they are supposed not to know which way the harrow goes. Or if they do, they are bound to be prejudiced; whereas an official is assumed to be impartial even if his reputation is at stake. He generally knows and cares as much about India as the West End of London knows and cares about the East End.

<sup>2</sup> *The India Review*, Feb. 27th, 1932. It was also noted that Sir Samuel had given the figure for total imprisonments on Feb. 1st as 15,000, whereas Reuter put the figure at 20,700. Figures published by the Howard League for Penal Reform in 1936 showed that at that time there were 296 persons per 100,000 of the population in jail in the N.W. Frontier Province and 137 in Burma, compared with 126 per 100,000 in Italy and 157 in Germany. The rate for England and Wales was 30.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the East India Association*, July, 1930. See pp. 155, 161, 167. The Indian Jails Committee in 1920 had recommended the closing down of the penal settlement in the Andaman Islands, on various grounds which included its unhealthiness.

<sup>4</sup> *Hansard*, Dec. 21st, 1932.

<sup>5</sup> The death of these three prisoners was the subject of a vigorous protest by Rabindranath Tagore and other non-political Indians, in a letter to the Indian Press dated Sept. 6th, 1933. By way of reply the Bengal Government sent another batch of prisoners to the islands.

<sup>6</sup> As it is clear that all vigorous criticism of any Government is liable to bring it into hatred and contempt (and more especially if the criticism is deserved) the clause in the penal code which makes this a punishable offence is in effect a statutory declaration of bureaucratic infallibility. As Mr. MacDonald said himself in *The Awakening of India*, the Indian Civil Service "has sought to widen the scope of sedition until it should include everything that was not flattery." (p. 182.)

<sup>7</sup> Bar fetters consist of two bars joined together and attached to ankle-rings.

<sup>8</sup> Standard Minimum Rules of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, No. 39.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in the *New Leader*, April 24th, 1936. When standing handcuffs are used, the prisoner's wrists are handcuffed to a staple so that he is forced to stand continuously until released.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter VIII.

<sup>11</sup> The medical evidence in this trial showed that the prisoner had suffered injuries which were likely to cause his death. Brief reports of this trial appeared in the *Times of India* and much fuller reports were published in the Indian Press.

<sup>12</sup> *The Brown Man's Burden*, by E. Holton James (Geneva 1931), p. 140.

<sup>13</sup> *The Government of India*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald.

<sup>14</sup> The close similarity will be noted between the terms of this ordinance and the Rowlatt Acts, summarised in Chap. IX. Of this ordinance and those which followed the *Star* (Jan. 4th, 1932) said that they were "drastic orders unequalled in their nature even, under the strictest Martial Law."

<sup>15</sup> This was precisely the meaning attached to the word when the *Daily Express* (Jan. 16th, 1932) announced that "there have been cases of European women being actually molested."

<sup>16</sup> Even "the juxtaposition of news items" was made a matter of warning in this Government Circular. More recently a postal notice of May 28th, 1936, issued under the authority of the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, has prohibited transmission by post of articles bearing "portraits of any prominent leader of the Civil Disobedience Movement."

<sup>17</sup> A *lathi* is the usual weapon of the Indian police—a long stick not uncommonly weighted at the end, with which the populace can be attacked at the discretion of local officials.

<sup>18</sup> At Narsapur also the merchants were warned by the Deputy Superintendent of Police in January, 1932, that action would be taken against them if they closed their shops.

<sup>19</sup> Letter by Lt.-Col. A. A. Irvine in the *Daily Mail*, Jan. 7th, 1932. It will be clear to any intelligent reader that, if such a man as this is an instrument of British justice, the imprisonment of Indians without trial, as permitted by various ordinances and an old John Company "regulation" of 1818 (still in use) is merely a way of dispensing with an unnecessary formality. A "special tribunal" is, in fact, a legal disguise for organised vengeance.

<sup>20</sup> See *The Indian News*, Dec. 17th, 1931. The judge described it as unfortunate and tragic, but a fact. "I have been in this country for twenty-five years," he said, "and I know it."

<sup>21</sup> May 28th, 1932. The evidence given here and below is entirely from non-Indian sources, though the author has in his possession enough Indian evidence to fill at least twenty volumes of this size, regarding atrocities in all parts of the country. For lack of space and in deference to racial prejudice only European witnesses are here cited.

<sup>22</sup> *Truth about India*, London, 1932. How difficult it was to expose such methods may be gathered from the fact that an Allahabad paper (the *Abhyadaya*) was recently penalised for reporting a speech made in

the Legislative Assembly. When a protest was made in the Assembly the Viceroy refused to allow any motion with regard to the matter. The *New Statesman* (Feb. 27th, 1932) mentions similar examples.

<sup>23</sup> Mr. Laurence Housman in the *India Review* Jan. 16th, 1932. "The repression that is pursued in India," wrote Bertrand Russell in a leaflet published at this time by the India League, "is severe even in the history of that country."

<sup>24</sup> Article by Sir John Maynard in the *India Review*, Jan. 16th, 1932.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 14th, 1932.

<sup>26</sup> *Free Press Journal*, Jan. 21st, 1932. This report was later published as a pamphlet in England under the title *India: The North West Frontier*, after being refused by the *Manchester Guardian*. With so much suppression of all points of view but their own, imperialists can hardly grumble if sometimes they are debited with crimes they have not committed. The suppression of important facts in this country has been almost a matter of unanimity in the political and religious press.

<sup>27</sup> *Associated Press* cable from Peshawar, Jan. 19th, 1932. As the censorship was in force this cable must have been passed by the Peshawar authorities as authentic and reliable.

<sup>28</sup> Chief Commissioner's Statement, Peshawar, Dec. 29th, 1931. "In fact," he continues with unconscious humour, "the inhabitants of one of the villages chiefly implicated asked for permission to prepare a meal for the Deputy Commissioner and the whole of his escort." A number of similar and equally foolish statements were officially recorded.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 26th, 1932. This correspondent did not forget to mention that he had been "told officially" that those who had stirred up the border were "paid agents of Soviet Government."

<sup>30</sup> Anderson was Joint Under-Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland during the most brutal period of repression in 1920.

<sup>31</sup> *Daily Herald*, April 2nd, 1932. Mr. Laski in this remarkable article paid a special tribute to the British Civil Service as "the guardians of a great tradition" and expressed his hope that Anderson would stress the need for a "renewal of Lord Irwin's spirit." We shall shortly examine what this spirit amounted to.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Mr. Frank C. Bancroft (dated Y.M.C.A. Calcutta, June 1st, 1933), to Sir John Anderson.

<sup>33</sup> For the impossibility of obtaining justice in the courts, as a general rule, compare the account of Ireland in 1920-21 in Brig. General Crozier's book *A Word to Gandhi* (London, 1931), p. 37.

<sup>34</sup> Proceedings of the Bengal Council, April 1st, 1932. The prisoner was the editor of the *New Era* (a nationalist weekly) who had been sentenced to two years' hard labour.

<sup>35</sup> Article by Peter Freeman (ex-M.P. for Brecon and Radnor) in *The India Review*, April 2nd, 1932. "Posterity," wrote Mr. Freeman, "will class such brutalities as worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta or the burning of Joan of Arc."

<sup>36</sup> *The Calcutta Guardian*, an English Christian journal, gave a full account of this assault in its issue of Feb. 4th, 1932. For a similar crime Miss Madeleine Slade was extorted from Bombay, because, said the *Daily Telegraph* (Feb. 17th, 1932), "she has acted in a manner prejudicial

to public safety in furthering an unlawful movement. Miss Slade has spent the greater part of her time, since the arrest of Gandhi, in spinning cloth."

<sup>37</sup> Dr. Paton was charged with assisting pickets. Actually he was quite unconnected with any political activity. His crime consisted of his clothes.

<sup>38</sup> Letter dated March 8th, 1932. Published in *The Friend*, March 18th, 1932.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Dr. Paton, published in *The Friend*, March 18th, 1932.

<sup>40</sup> *The Times*, Feb. 28th, 1932. His crime was that, unlike most missionaries, he sympathised with the Nationalists, and said so.

<sup>41</sup> Mr. Leonard Matters in the *India Review*, Nov. 26th, 1932.

<sup>42</sup> *India Review*, Nov. 26th, 1932. Ellen Wilkinson also tells of a man she met in jail "who was serving six months for the sin of allowing his brother-in-law, a prominent Congress worker, to sleep on his verandah and feed at his table." For similar treatment of the *ashrams* under the Labour Government, compare *Rebel India*, p. 86. As in 1932, the movables were frequently confiscated and auctioned in 1930.

<sup>43</sup> *Condition of India*. London, 1933. The delegation consisted of four members: Miss Monica Whately, Miss Ellen Wilkinson, Mr. Leonard Matters and Mr. Krishna Menon.

<sup>44</sup> Miss Monica Whately, in *The India Review*, Nov. 26th, 1932.

<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, April 30th, 1932.

<sup>46</sup> This was officially admitted in the Legislative Assembly. See the *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 17th 1932. In 1930 a more common method of censorship was to accept the telegram (and the money) and merely withhold both. The author came across innumerable instances of this.

<sup>47</sup> *Daily Herald*, Jan. 28th, 1933. The Hunger Marchers were also cut out for similar reasons, and in the end the film was withdrawn because everything of interest or importance had been deleted to satisfy the authorities.

<sup>48</sup> *Unity* (Chicago), Sept. 12th, 1932. The events here mentioned took place during the "truce" between the Government and the Congress and arose from the rent resistance campaign which had been forced upon the peasants of the United Provinces by the fall in prices. Further reference is made later to this campaign.

<sup>49</sup> This persecution of the press is in line with the whole history of British administration in India. An excellent article on this subject in the *Modern Review* (November, 1928), quotes a minute of the Calcutta Council in 1822 openly stating that a free press was not compatible with despotic government.

<sup>50</sup> *Gazette of India Extraordinary*, Dec. 18th, 1935. See also the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1935. The "certification" of this Act at such a time made it clear how little might be expected from the new Constitution! The Burma Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1931 had a similar history.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from 2nd Lieut. C. M. S. Marsden in the *Farnham Herald*, Feb. 17th, 1934.

<sup>52</sup> Official statement on the operation of the Press Ordinances, circulated in the Legislative Assembly in 1935.

<sup>53</sup> The seizure of such books constituted no innovation. Gandhi's translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* was banned in India many

years ago, and MacDonald's two books on India were banned under his own premiership of a Labour Government.

<sup>54</sup> Naba Jivan Ghosh on Sept. 22nd, 1936, and Santosh Chandra Ganguly on Oct. 17th. Ghosh had been detained in various camps and jails since his arrest on May 9th, 1930 (under the Labour Government). No charge had ever been brought against either of these men. The number of persons in prison without trial in Bengal was 1,200, according to information given in Oct., 1936, by Sir Henry Craik to the Bengal Legislative Council; 225 "detenus" were stated to have been released during the year, some conditionally and some "home-domiciled" (that is to say, forbidden to leave their homes on pain of re-arrest, even to earn their living). At the same time, further internments without trial were still proceeding.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from J. W. Taylor, His Majesty's Consul at Vienna, dated March 12th, 1936. Mr. Bose is a Socialist and one of the leaders of the left-wing of the Indian National Congress.

<sup>56</sup> Mr. Harold Laski in the *India Review* (April 2nd, 1932). He endeavoured to contrast the wickedness of the National Government with the virtues of its predecessor. "Repression," he wrote, "has succeeded to conciliation as the basis of policy."

<sup>57</sup> *The Times*, April 30th, 1932. The exact accuracy of the figures quoted is immaterial here, as they were admittedly very large in both cases, though those usually quoted for 1930 are the highest on record.

<sup>58</sup> *The Daily Herald*, for example, on March 5th, 1934, compared the flogging of political prisoners in Germany with similar floggings in India. It also remarked that India had its "concentration camps" for political prisoners "who have not been found guilty of any crime." Both these observations would have been equally true in 1930; but the *Daily Herald* at that time did not draw attention to the fact, nor did any other paper to the "right" of the *New Leader* and the *Daily Worker*.

<sup>59</sup> This Ordinance had a farcial provision that within a month two judges should "examine the case" in camera. The accused was not to be present at this "examination" or to be represented by counsel. He was not even to know the charge against him.

<sup>60</sup> See the Indian Press Ordinance of April 27th, 1930, published by H.M. Stationery Office. Such measures were supported by the Bishop of Calcutta in a letter to *Young India* (June 26th, 1930). He quoted St. Paul: "He that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God."

<sup>61</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, Oct. 11th, 1930. This Ordinance also permitted "the occupation of immovable property."

<sup>62</sup> Regulation 11, Martial Law Regulations at Sholapur, promulgated in May, 1930.

<sup>63</sup> Regulations XIII and VII. In each case a fine could be added to the punishment by imprisonment.

<sup>64</sup> Regulation VI. (Our italics.) It was for disobeying this infamous order and Regulation II that Vishwanath Balkrishna, a boy of fifteen, received fifteen strokes with a rattan cane.

<sup>65</sup> This was the sentence received by Tulsidas Subhan Jadhav, Secretary of the Local Congress Committee. Seven others were punished for the same offence, of whom two received five years' imprisonment and a fine.



<sup>66</sup> *Times of India*, May 19th, 1930.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, the *Bombay Government Gazette Extraordinary* of March 20th, 1930, banning three films showing Gandhi's march to the sea.

<sup>68</sup> *Morning Post*, August 4th, 1930. According to this paper: "275 demonstrators who were squatting in the road were injured" (our italics). This was only one of innumerable similar incidents, many of which were reported in the British Press.

<sup>69</sup> Slocombe was, of course, hastily recalled after a few of his vivid accounts of police brutalities had shown that he refused to assist in the general suppression of unpleasant news. An account of the police methods in Bombay, based on Slocombe's despatches, will be found in Mr. Brockway's *Indian Crisis* (pp. 163-4).

<sup>70</sup> *Rebel India*, pp. 37-39. Mr. Brailsford took the District Commissioner with him to one village, to see the wounds and bruises. He was also an eye-witness of many of the police brutalities. All that he writes is confirmed by the present author's experience of police methods in 1930.

<sup>71</sup> *Rebel India*, pp. 39-40. Of another prison at Dum-Dum (near Calcutta) Mr. Brailsford wrote: "The situation is malarious and the prison is infested with mosquitoes." No soap was provided, and the place was dirty and overrun with parasites. This was typical of the treatment of "C Class" prisoners (the great majority) though a few (of whom Gandhi was one) received very good treatment as "A" or "B" Class in order to create an impression of leniency. These were all well-known people whose treatment attracted public attention abroad. The *Calcutta Gazette* of Oct. 30th, 1930, published rules regulating "detenues," imprisoned without trial at Buxafort, showing that a semi-military discipline was imposed upon these unconvicted prisoners.

<sup>72</sup> According to *Hansard* (May 19th, 1930) Wedgwood Benn stated on that date that about forty newspapers and seventeen weekly or bi-weekly periodicals were officially estimated to have ceased publication owing to the Ordinance. Brockway in *The Indian Crisis* (pp. 178-9) gives some details regarding the securities demanded from Nationalist journals, and their cessation.

<sup>73</sup> Mr. R. Paine Scripps, President of the Scripps-Howard Newspapers, at a luncheon of the English-speaking Union in London on May 22nd, 1930 (quoted in *The Indian Crisis*, p. 179). Mr. Paine Scripps told how the United Press of America received only five of sixteen consecutive daily despatches. The Director of this agency had then gone himself to India, and a 400-word cable he sent regarding events at Dharasana was cut down by the Bombay Government to 132 words. When Mr. Beckett (now a Fascist himself) asked Mr. Benn whether he remembered his own very eloquent speeches regarding the Freedom of the Press, Mr. Benn did not reply. (See *Hansard*, May 19th, 1930.)

<sup>74</sup> The first firing occurred on April 23rd, 1930, when the military twice shot indiscriminately into an Indian crowd. There was a second massacre on May 31st. During the present author's last few months in India (in 1930) firing was reported every week from some part of the country, while *lathi charges* were a daily occurrence.

<sup>75</sup> One hundred and twenty-five persons whose names and addresses were known were proved to have been killed. There were doubtless others in addition. The Government estimate was thirty killed.

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, May 1st, 1930. The mutineers' own words, as reported later, at the trial, were: "We will not shoot our unarmed brothers. You may blow us from the guns if you like."

<sup>77</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, May 1st, 1930. The military correspondent meanwhile pointed with satisfaction to the "class system of organisation" in the Indian Army, which was "a British convenience." Half the whole army, he said, "is drawn from the 7 per cent of the population who live in the Punjab," and even here "the classes who are not allowed to recruit are more numerous than those who are drawn upon."

<sup>78</sup> Challenged in the House with regard to the Garhwali case, Mr. Benn defended the "severe sentences," as he admitted them to be. "I cannot imagine," he said, "a more serious charge in the circumstances in which we find ourselves in India to-day." (*Hansard*, April 28th, 1931.)

<sup>79</sup> This drunken boast was reported in the *Indian Daily Mail*, (May 10th, 1930), a paper hostile to the Congress and at that time edited by an Englishman who supported Lord Irwin's policy.

<sup>80</sup> This conversation was recorded by Mr. Elwin in a personal letter to the present author. Mr. Elwin and other European witnesses saw some of the victims of these assaults with the marks of the cigarette burns all over their bodies. A letter from the author to Mr. Elwin at the time, asking permission to publish these details, shared the fate of many others. It was lost in the post.

<sup>81</sup> These stories, freely reported in the British Press (including *The Times*) were denied by the Bombay Government "Director of Information."

<sup>82</sup> The correspondence between Mr. Ameechand (the uncle of the boy) and Mr. Knight was published in *Young India* of May 22nd, 1930, shortly before that paper ceased publication owing to the Press Ordinance. It re-appeared as a cyclo-styled sheet, illegally issued.

<sup>83</sup> Mr. Knight is clearly one of the exceptions to Mr. Alexander's dictum in *The Indian Ferment* that "The Englishman in the Tropics often ceases to be a gentleman."

<sup>84</sup> For example, on January 12th, 1931, four men were executed who had been tried under Martial Law and seriously handicapped in their defence, partly owing to the summary nature of the trial. In the High Court the sentence was upheld by a majority of two judges to one, one of the judges holding that three of the accused were innocent. In the demonstrations against these executions the *Evening News* (Jan. 16th, 1931) mentioned that 100 persons were injured by the police, in Bombay, and that nearly 140,000 mill workers "downed tools" for the day.

<sup>85</sup> See *Hansard*, May 19th, 1930. "What is there," asked Mr. Kirkwood on this occasion, "in the part you are playing just now that Lord Birkenhead would not have played if he had been on the job?" Mr. Benn made no reply.

<sup>86</sup> See *The Indian Crisis*, p. 168.

<sup>87</sup> The Order was dated June 20th, 1930, and signed by the District Magistrate, Mr. F. W. Stewart.

<sup>88</sup> Independent enquiries were prohibited at Chirner (following police firing on Sept. 26th) among many other places. At Ranpur three successive committees were banned.

<sup>89</sup> The University Committee met under the Presidency of Mr. G. H. Langley (the Vice-Chancellor).

<sup>90</sup> The Bengal Government refused to allow the prosecution of the police for the death of this student.

<sup>91</sup> It was about this time that Mr. Frederick P. Tostevin, Principal of King Edward's College, Amraoti, and an experienced I.C.S. officer, resigned his post because "Government in its extreme ruthless repressive zeal has been asking us to extend coercion even in the sacred seats of learning."

<sup>92</sup> The success of the boycott is a good indication of this fact. British grey cotton piece goods imported in October, 1930, were less than 10 per cent. of the value imported in October, 1929.

<sup>93</sup> "Not a single district in the Province has escaped," he said, "and even remote tracts . . . have had the usually tranquil surface ruffled by the breeze of agitation."

<sup>94</sup> These figures were given by Sir James Crerar in the Legislative Assembly on Jan. 26th, 1931. They were regarded as under-estimates in every particular, and do not include the innumerable injuries from *lathi* charges.

<sup>95</sup> For the notorious reputation of punitive police in India see Colonel Osburn's remarks in *Must England Lose India?*

<sup>96</sup> These and other similar measures were announced in various Government Gazettes of different dates. Under the National Government in 1933 an innovation was made by the application of a punitive tax to Midnapore, payable by Hindus only. Government servants and pensioners were in every case exempt from such punitive taxes.

<sup>97</sup> *Associated Press* cable, dated Peshawar, Nov. 29th, 1930. The man's name was Habib Nur. The attempted assassination took place on Feb. 17th, 1931, and Habib Nur was executed two days later (on the 19th), the case being tried under a regulation of 1901. Habib Nur asserted that Captain Barnes had killed his grandfather and that the attempted murder was an act of vengeance. In a vote of censure passed against the Government for this execution every elected Indian member in the Legislative Assembly voted for the motion.

<sup>98</sup> See *The Spectator*, Dec. 6th, 1930. A similar attempt was made to intimidate Mr. Verrier Elwin for the same offence. Mr. Benn's attention to the Madura case was demanded by Mr. Wilfred Wellock (*Hansard*, July 28th, 1930) but the Government, as usual, did not intervene. This hatred of *Khadi* is symbolic of the fear inspired by the boycott of foreign cloth and British goods generally. For the amazing success of the boycott, and the power exerted by Congress in enforcing it (even when Congress itself was an illegal organisation), see *Rebel India* (p. 25). Two years later the *Daily Express* (Jan. 16th, 1932), announced that: "The Viceroy's firm action has . . . smashed up all but the extremist elements, *but the boycott is 95 per cent effective.*" (Our italics). This is a curious conception of a "smash-up."

<sup>99</sup> *Meerut: Release the Prisoners.* (London, May 1933) with a foreword by Walter Citrine.

<sup>100</sup> Questioned regarding the Meerut Case, Mr. Benn informed the House of Commons that he was "not prepared to interfere with the discretion of the courts." (*Hansard*, Feb. 23rd, 1931.)

<sup>101</sup> This referred to the removal of the accused from towns such as Bombay and Calcutta (where they were legally entitled to trial by jury) to Meerut, where a jury was not necessary by law.

<sup>102</sup> As late as August 17th, 1932, the *Daily Herald* was misleading the British public by describing the "assessors" in this case as "equivalent to an English jury." That this was a lie was promptly demonstrated by the judge, who completely disregarded the opinion of these assessors. Six of the accused were found "not guilty" by a majority of the assessors. Yet only three were acquitted. Of the three Englishmen, Hutchinson, found "not guilty" by all five assessors, was given four years' rigorous imprisonment.

<sup>103</sup> See the leading articles in the *Manchester Guardian* (Jan. 17th, 1933) and the *Star* (August 4th, 1933).

<sup>104</sup> Memorial for the Release of the Prisoners. London, March, 1933.

<sup>105</sup> See *Rebel India*, pp. 63-68. Mr. Holton James in *The Brown Man's Burden* records how Brailsford himself was lulled to sleep by the trial and woke to whisper: "I think this is the most deadly thing I ever had to listen to." The omnipotent judge was not a lawyer, but a member of the I.C.S. with violent political prejudices; and it is interesting to recall that it was of the I.C.S. that a former Lt.-Governor of East Bengal wrote: "*They learn no law worth the name, a little Indian history, no political economy, and they gain a smattering of one Indian vernacular.*" (Sir Bamphylde Fuller in *Studies of Indian Life and Sentiment*: our italic.) He described this inadequate equipment as "an insult to the intelligence of the country."

<sup>106</sup> "We in this country," said Mr. Wedgwood Benn, "should not meet Nazism and Fascism by introducing their methods of rubber truncheons and bullets." (*Daily Herald*, October 19th, 1933.)

<sup>107</sup> *Industrial News*, May 30th, 1933. About the same time the National Joint Council's May Day leaflet in 1933 denounced "suppression of free speech, the free press, and the right of public assembly; the bludgeoning of peaceable citizens, domiciliary searches, the murder or brutal maltreatment of political opponents; intimidation, false witness, illegal proscription and criminal violence." These crimes, of which the Labour leaders accused Hitler, had in each instance been committed by themselves in India according to evidence at least as reliable as any we have regarding Germany—though (like Hitler) the Labour leaders officially denied many of the charges.

<sup>108</sup> *Hansard*, November 11th, 1929. In the same discussion Mr. Benn "regretted that he could take no action" regarding the release of political prisoners. This was before Civil Disobedience had been started.

<sup>109</sup> *Hansard*, November 7th, 1929. In another reference to the Tory Viceroy Benn said that "the Government, and, I am sure, the whole House, have every confidence in His Excellency." (*Hansard*, April 7th, 1930.)

<sup>110</sup> *The New Clarion*, October 22nd, 1932. In this article Mr. Benn argued the case that, since India could not in future be governed

successfully "without her consent," British imperialism must compromise sufficiently to avoid a revolution. This was, of course, the real cause of the "reforms."

<sup>111</sup> For example, after the firing by the police on the Calcutta carters, during a strike, on April 1st, 1930, a question was asked in the House. It must have caused some Conservative chuckles to hear Mr. Benn, the champion of the working class, explaining that the police "acted with great restraint and discretion in a very difficult situation." (*Hansard*, May 6th, 1930.)

<sup>112</sup> See Chapters X and XI. The Government of India Act (1935) Schedule 6 (page 338) makes it clear that the small minority enfranchised will be selected on a basis of property, taxation, literacy and army service; that is to say, an illiterate person will have no vote unless his assumed ignorance is coupled with land, money or a "loyalty" record as an ex-soldier. As Brailsford said, the Constitution "ignores the village and emancipates its owner."

<sup>113</sup> For these and other details, see the India Act of 1935. Not without good reason and prophetic insight did Mr. Justice Beaman write in the *Empire Review* (Feb. 1919): "We did not take India, nor do we keep India, for the Indians. . . . Every Reform, every large measure, all important administrative changes, should be referred to one standard and one standard only—the interests of England." This is the view of an ex-Justice of the Bombay High Court.

<sup>114</sup> *Hansard*, March 29th, 1933.

<sup>115</sup> *Daily Herald*, February 12th, 1935.

<sup>116</sup> "Candidus" in the *Investor's Chronicle*, April 1st, 1933. This writer found especial satisfaction in the fact that over half the Indian public debt had been raised internally, so that it was "to the interest of the Indian investor, as much as the British, to preserve the credit of the Indian Government." The interest of the Indian peasant was, of course, not considered. (Compare Chapter VI, Note 49.)

<sup>117</sup> *New Statesman*, Sept. 26th, 1936. About 80 per cent. of the Central Budget will be earmarked for various payments guaranteed by the Viceroy.

<sup>118</sup> Sir A. Baillie in the House of Commons quoted in *The Times*, March 29th, 1933. In the same number Sir Stanley Reed in a long letter pointed out that "reform" was the only way to avoid revolution. The same day Mr. Baldwin declared in the House of Commons that his own attitude had been dictated by the consideration that "if we went forward we might save India for the Empire." (*Hansard*, March 29th, 1933.)

<sup>119</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 13th, 1935. Mr. Neville Chamberlain at the Conservative Party Conference in 1933 said that "he was convinced that the proposals offered the best possible prospect of increasing British trade in India." (*Evening Standard*, Oct. 6th, 1933.)

<sup>120</sup> This point was made clear in a letter by Wing Commander A. W. H. James (*Daily Telegraph*, March 30th, 1933) in which he answered the apprehensions of the "Die-hards."

<sup>121</sup> This official interference was admitted in the United Provinces Council on June 17th, 1936, by the Finance Member (Mr. Clay) who promised it should not continue. There is no known reason for accepting this pledge, and a recent report from the Patna division, during

the elections, even states that Congress supporters, demonstrating on their way to the polling booth, were fired upon by the police.

<sup>122</sup> *Foreign Affairs*, February, 1931.

<sup>123</sup> See the alternative report presented to the Joint Committee by Major Attlee and his three Labour colleagues. Benn had previously made it clear on behalf of his party that it "was inconceivable to him that, in dealing with any scheme of constitutional change in India, Parliament would fail to provide safeguards, should they be needed, against a breach of the conditions under which these loans" (i.e., Government loans) "were issued." (Quoted by the City Editor of the *Daily Mail*, Feb. 11th, 1931).

<sup>124</sup> The argument is, of course, "paternalist," though it is not clear upon what democratic principle the people of one country may assume the "childhood" of other nations or races and kidnap them wholesale. Contrary to the usual practice, these British "parents" are fed and clothed by their adopted charges, while the "children" are left to starve.

<sup>125</sup> *Daily Herald*, March 30th, 1933.

<sup>126</sup> The only difference where India is concerned, between a "broad-minded" Conservative and the Labour leaders would appear to be the absence of "broad-mindedness" in the latter. Major Graham Pole in *Labour* (April, 1934) made it clear that in his opinion reform in India was "the only way of staving off a revolution in India on a big scale and of retaining India in the British Commonwealth of Nations." Thus the Labour point of view once more coincides with that of the "progressive" Tories.

<sup>127</sup> When the Round Table Conference met in 1930, Mr. Benn was asked whether he would release these political prisoners "as an act of grace." His reply that he "feared this suggestion could not be entertained" was made in a mutter which was inaudible, and had to be repeated at the request of Mr. Churchill. (*Hansard*, June 23rd, 1930). Many of these prisoners died as a result of their sufferings; and one of them (the wife of Jawaharlal Nehru) was later lamented by Hannen Swaffer as having been "killed by Indian officialdom."

<sup>128</sup> *Daily Herald*, Feb. 6th, 1936. Lansbury was replying to the charge of having voted for armaments and said: "I only wish I had never taken office, because I think I did betray my pacifist principles while I was a member of the Government." Presumably this applies *a fortiori* to having made such effective use of the armaments after voting the credits.

<sup>129</sup> These were the caves in which the tribesmen were taking refuge.

<sup>130</sup> An emergency resolution to this effect was tabled in the name of Westminster and Birmingham. Thanks to Attlee's opposition on the Labour Party Executive, this resolution was never even put before the Conference.

<sup>131</sup> The minority in the Assembly which supported the Government on this occasion consisted, as usual, mainly of officials and other Government nominees, the voting being sixty-seven to forty-four. The debate took place on September 4th, 1935.

<sup>132</sup> See *The Times* of Nov. 22nd, 1924. Lord Thomson told how, on one occasion, "the effect of our air attack was appalling. Some 700 of the tribesmen were killed, and the rest, seized with panic, fled into the desert where hundreds must have perished from thirst." This was under the first Labour Government.

<sup>133</sup> *Bradford Pioneer*, August, 5th 1932.

<sup>134</sup> See the *Report on the Rebellion in Burma up to May 3rd, 1931*, presented by the Secretary of State for India to Parliament, June, 1931. The number killed, as usual, was believed to be much greater than the official estimate.

<sup>135</sup> See *Hansard*, Feb. 8th, 1932.

<sup>136</sup> *News-Chronicle*, Nov. 7th, 1930. In an article in the *Sunday Referee* (Nov. 6th, 1932) Cecil specifically referred to the necessity for retaining bombing 'planes "in constantly disturbed areas such as the North-West Frontier of India and Morocco."

<sup>137</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 67. In fairness to the Independent Labour Party, which was then affiliated to the Labour Party, it should be noted that as early as 1924 the I.L.P. had dissociated itself from Labour's India policy. (See Rutherford's *Modern India*, p. 261.)

<sup>138</sup> Telegram dated May 5th, 1931. The Act (with correspondence relating to it) was published by an order of the House of Commons in June, 1931.

<sup>139</sup> Article in the *Westminster Gazette*, June 16th, 1924. Harold Laski in the *New York Nation* (June 6th, 1934) went even further and pointed out the injustice of applying preference to non-self-governing colonies which were thus forced "to pay more for cotton goods—not in their own interest but in that of Lancashire."

<sup>140</sup> *Daily Mail*, Feb. 11th, 1931.

<sup>141</sup> See Chapter VII.

<sup>142</sup> *The Times*, July 1st, 1932.

<sup>143</sup> E.G. the Labour endorsement of the Simon Commission and of the additional war costs charged to India (mentioned above). Dr. Rutherford also refers in *Modern India* (p. 261) to an occasion "when the Labour Party in opposition tamely supported the Tory Bill for bleeding India by increasing the emoluments of the British bureaucracy." Rutherford was himself a Labour M.P.

<sup>144</sup> E.G. Lord Snell on several occasions. More commonly Labour speakers prefer to disguise the Empire as "the British Commonwealth of Nations," though no such institution exists. In the House of Lords on February 26th, 1924, Lord Olivier stated bluntly that "the right of British statesmen, public servants and industrialists to be in India to-day is the fact that they have made the India of to-day." Mussolini could make the same claim for the Fascists in Italy—or Abyssinia.

<sup>145</sup> For comparison the reader may note the behaviour of the French Popular Front Government in 1936. When this Government came into power there were numerous stay-in strikes in France, and the strikers received as good treatment as a capitalist Government could afford them. Meanwhile in Pondichéry (a French settlement in Southern India) the authorities fired on the unarmed workers. The Communist Party, which rightly denounced the imperialism of the two British Labour Governments, kept very quiet about this event for obvious reasons, though J. R. Campbell had written in the *Daily Worker* (June 6th, 1936) that "the Communist Party will press for a Colonial Commission to examine the state of the French Colonies with a view to suggesting immediate improvements in the conditions of the inhabitants." Certainly few Conservatives would oppose such a proposal. Meanwhile conditions in Pondichéry remain slightly worse than in British India.

<sup>146</sup> The complete neglect of Indian news (apart from much publicity to every alleged "communal" riot) is one of the most significant characteristics of the Labour Press. The Conservatives at least appear to recognise that their insistence on imperialism implies a little interest in the Empire and its affairs.

<sup>147</sup> The reason for this situation is painfully obvious; for whilst the average worker neither knows nor understands very much about the operations of imperialism, the Party or Trade Union "Boss" knows too much. He realises that the line he takes means a quiet life, a comfortable salary and ultimate absorption into bourgeois society. Hence we have a "united front" on the subject of imperialism, based on the recognition that it is fundamental to British "prosperity" while capitalism lasts. The Press will take the most radical articles on war, Fascism, slums and unemployment: but the speaker or writer who attacks the Empire is the real pariah of British politics, and seldom is he given a hearing.

<sup>148</sup> Compare Edward Thompson's statement in *The Other Side of the Medal* that in our attitude to Indians "we judge as slave-drivers would and we assess the virtues of our fellow citizens as a hunter assesses the virtue of dogs." (p. 118.)

<sup>149</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 85.

<sup>150</sup> *New Leader*, Oct. 3rd, 1930.

<sup>151</sup> The author was then in India and read this quotation in a *Reuter* cable from London, dated April 25th, 1930. Nothing could have been more frivolous than to suggest that India either hoped or expected anything from the report of this Commission, which was regarded with scorn and hatred by the mass of those who knew anything about it.

<sup>152</sup> The people of India alone (without reckoning the other subject peoples in the Empire, mainly coloured colonials) constitute two-thirds of the total population of the British Empire.

<sup>153</sup> As this book is being written the latest alleged convert to the Popular Front is Mr. Churchill. It will easily be imagined how popular such a front would prove in India.

<sup>154</sup> The possibilities of "imperialist socialism" are not discussed here, as they would not arise under a Popular Front Government; but it may be remarked that any such system is as unsound in practice as it is in principle. The colonial workers and peasants would rightly resist any form of imperialism; whilst the propertied classes would withdraw their support at the slightest suggestion of socialism. The result would be the isolation of the ruling race and probably a successful national revolution. It all happened in Greece in the third century B.C.

<sup>155</sup> This is not intended to imply that such a coalition would prevent war. Indeed, if war has not broken loose before such a coalition comes to power, it may be because British capitalists are well aware that no Government is better fitted to conduct a war against Germany. A Popular Front Government would be more imperialist than the National Government, because it would represent the vested interests of Britain less diluted by the interests of international finance. It would also represent the classes interested in markets as distinct from the classes interested also in foreign investments. Ultimately, of course, a Popular Front Government (or any other reformist Government) brings the disillusionment of the workers and probably Fascism as a result.



## CHAPTER XVI

### THE NEMESIS OF EMPIRE

THE Indian peasant has fortunately developed a keener political sense and has a greater incentive to clear thinking than the average British worker. Hence there exist in India to-day powerful social forces which will soon precipitate the crisis which British Labour seeks to avoid. Considered in conjunction with the economic forces, which we have already noted, these social forces may be expected to revolutionise the situation;<sup>1</sup> for British Labour will adopt a very different attitude as British exports to India decrease and coolie competition increasingly menaces the home industries. When at such a time India proves every day a more costly and difficult problem there will be a growing party in favour of cutting our losses rather than crushing a revolution;<sup>2</sup> and it is precisely at that point that the pioneer efforts of anti-imperialists in Britain should enable them to play a leading part.

The immediate issues in India centre around the struggle for bare existence and the demand for Trade Union rights, release of political prisoners, free speech and right of assembly, freedom of the press, etc. Unlike its fascist imitators, the Indian Government has no popular backing; and a well organised popular movement can always count on the Government's fears of alienating new classes, of exasperating existing discontent and of further deterioration in the trade with Great Britain. It is therefore a sound and practical policy to press all genuine reformist demands in so far as they contribute to the general purposes of the Indian revolution.

This largely explains the alignment of classes in modern India. Just as an alliance between the reformist leaders and the middle-classes in Britain can only be *based upon imperialism*, so, on the other hand, a similar alliance in

India can only be justified on the basis of a common struggle *against* imperialism. "Popular Fronts," which in imperialist countries prove on analysis to be anti-democratic in character,<sup>3</sup> are commonly justified in colonial countries as being the means by which national independence can be achieved, and those minimum rights established which constitute the progressive aspect of the bourgeois revolution. In short, the principal reason against a Popular Front in Britain can in India be used as an argument in its favour.

To use Lenin's phrase, a nationalist movement in India can be "objectively revolutionary,"<sup>4</sup> just as the British Labour leaders are "objectively reactionary," despite their working class origin. The Labour bosses, in alliance with other imperialists and the feudal element of Indian society, stand for a system of social organisation roughly equivalent to Czarism. On the other hand, the Indian petty bourgeoisie, though their demand is limited to independence and political democracy, are revolutionary by comparison.

The Indian National Congress has been for many years the potential instrument of a popular front in India, an instrument imperfect and often unreliable, but (on account of the mass support it has commanded) the only possible instrument for those who have sought to utilise the tide of nationalism. The most prominent socialists in India have always taken the view that they should work through Congress and should collaborate with the bourgeois nationalists for the immediate and specific purposes of the struggle against British imperialism.<sup>5</sup> The formation of a Socialist Party within the loose frame-work of the Congress is an important step which marks the increasing influence of socialist thought on the nationalist movement.

Among the pioneers of this policy was M. N. Roy; and it is interesting to note that the Communist Party, which to-day demands Popular Fronts in the most inappropriate circumstances, denounced and attacked Roy for years because he anticipated their policy in one of the few countries where such a policy was correctly applicable. M. N. Roy was expelled from the Communist International in 1929 "for his policy of class collaboration"<sup>6</sup> and was

much abused by Miss Beauchamp and other Communist writers for opposing the Communist policy of splitting the trade unions. It is interesting to notice that the Communist Party is to-day rejoicing over the re-union of the Indian Trade Union Congress and the National Trade Union Federation,<sup>7</sup> for which Roy laboured in vain and was rewarded with scurrilous abuse.

The demand for a Constituent Assembly, in which to-day the Communists are united with Nehru and the Indian socialists and nationalists,<sup>8</sup> was put forward by Roy in 1930.<sup>9</sup> In January, 1932, this "traitor" to the working-class was convicted of "conspiracy to wage war against the King," the only evidence against him being views which he held or had held previously.<sup>10</sup> This case, as outrageous in many ways as the Meerut trial, was completely ignored by the Communist Party, and Miss Beauchamp, who makes frequent references to Roy,<sup>11</sup> does not even mention his imprisonment. He was released in November, 1936, very broken in health.

Whilst British concessions to their class interests have tended increasingly to draw the propertied classes away from the nationalist movement, socialist permeation has had a profound effect on the National Congress. Thus in 1931, a declaration of fundamental rights was adopted by the Congress which included adult suffrage, freedom of speech, the press and association, sex equality in all legal rights and obligations, legal provision for old age, sickness and unemployment, prohibition of child labour, trade union rights, and state control of key industries and mineral resources. These may be termed paper promises, but the significant fact is that they were a necessary concession to the growing socialist element in the Congress and its mass contacts. In a self-governing India it is at least certain that •

"no political party could hope to live for more than a day if it said that it had no programme but the maintenance of law and order."<sup>12</sup>

To keep the National Congress to its declared objective of national independence, to ensure the continuation of

the political struggle by every practical means, to democratise the Congress itself and make it the mouth-piece of every popular demand, the instrument of every popular struggle—such are the tasks of the socialists within the framework of the nationalist movement. It is already true to say that this nationalist coalition is far more radical in its outlook than most so-called socialist parties in Europe, just as many of these nationalists appear to understand the true meaning of internationalism better than the Labour leaders of Britain, who conceal behind the façade of Geneva the power politics of a gluttonous Empire.

India's contribution to the League of Nations is the third largest, though her delegations are nominated by the Secretary of State on the Viceroy's recommendation.<sup>13</sup> Useless as the League proved to Abyssinia in its hour of extremity, no one would have expected it to be anything else if Mussolini had himself nominated the Abyssinian delegation. Yet such is the exact parallel in the case of India; and the representatives of her vast population only add a puppet delegation to the diplomatic cohorts of her conqueror. Mr. Horace Alexander (a Geneva enthusiast himself) has recorded with characteristic candour the difficulties of talking about the League in India, where as early as 1927 it was regarded as "a concealed drug; at the heart of it was the Imperialism of the Western Powers."<sup>14</sup>

In December, 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru was for the first time elected President of the Congress. It marked a turning-point in Indian nationalism. In his presidential address Nehru deprecated the nationalism of isolation and exposed the aggressive nationalism of empire. "Independence," he said, "for us means complete freedom from the British domination and the British imperialism. Having attained her freedom I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world co-operation."<sup>15</sup> The theme of Nehru's speech was that peace could never come from imperialism and capitalism. Nationalist India has grasped the significance of imperialism and is rapidly learning its causal connection with capitalist economy.

Forced by their position to face the challenge of imperialism, the Indian nationalists have drawn the logical

conclusions with regard to imperialist war. The Congress is pledged to oppose any war in which Britain takes part for the simple reason that every government in Britain while the Empire in India lasts is in all circumstances the enemy of the Indian people.<sup>16</sup> Here again the Congress Socialist Party has taken the lead. "We at least," writes M. R. Masani, "cannot be told that by fighting for the British Empire we shall be defending our Motherland!

The only war in which the Indian people are interested is that for their national liberation, and therefore it is possible for both nationalists and socialists to agree that the correct policy for this country is to resist India's participation in any war and to utilise such an opportunity for furthering the struggle for National independence."<sup>17</sup>

To the Indian people, victims of 150 years of aggression, there is no validity in the distinction between the "aggressor" Powers and those which to-day hold by force the spoils which they seized in the past. Britain is to them a much greater menace than Germany; and whilst Indian sympathies were entirely with Abyssinia against Italy, they had no more incentive to assist Britain in any war arising from the "sanctions" policy than the Abyssinians would have if invited to assist Mussolini in the "liberation" of India.<sup>18</sup>

In the political field there is every hope that the Congress will avoid most of its past blunders. In the elections for the Provincial Councils, which are taking place this Spring, a powerful coalition of nationalist, socialist and trade union forces is contesting every possible seat, with the declared object of obstructing and exposing the sham legislatures.<sup>19</sup> In spite of the property franchise and other obstacles to any expression of democratic opinion, it should be possible in some of the provinces to show that the Government, when faced by a hostile majority, is ready and willing as ever to fall back on its dictatorial powers. If this is achieved it will have the valuable effect of completing the disillusionment of those petty bourgeois elements

which still hope for national salvation without revolution.

Defenders of the new Constitution, mainly British, have naturally urged that this is a foolish policy. Like the Greeks they have offered their gift horse; and it seems to them ungracious that the Indians (unlike the Trojans) should look it in the mouth. On the other hand there is the criticism that participation in the elections, even for obstructionist purposes, is a waste of time and energy. This criticism has much to be said for it; but the Congress policy will not be wasted if it is used to organise and demonstrate the strength and the quality of nationalism. The nationalists have refused on the one hand to sell their birthright on the specious plea that "a mess of pottage is better than none"; but by their close scrutiny of the mess they will be able to demonstrate the duplicity of Esau.

The leftward drift of the Congress may be clearly observed by comparing its programme with that of other political groups. The attitude of the princes is well known in Britain, as are the views of the Indian Liberals, an infinitesimal minority which has been widely advertised in this country on account of its accommodating opinions. When the Simon Report was published a statement was issued by the Indian landlords which contained little but the peevish complaints of a privileged class, dissatisfied with its emoluments.<sup>20</sup> A land-holders' conference which met at Lucknow two months before the outbreak of Civil Disobedience in 1930, condemned "the spirit of revolution and communism which was gradually creeping into the country" and

"strongly deprecated the adoption of the Independence creed by the Congress and its unmistakably inimical attitude and propaganda against property and capital."<sup>21</sup>

These fears were not groundless. Already Nehru, an avowed socialist, combined the presidencies of the National Congress and the All-India T.U.C. *Inquilab Zindabad* ("Long live Revolution") was rapidly replacing the older slogans of nationalism. The following year "in the United Provinces a no-rent campaign was led by Congress, and in December, 1931, over 100,000 peasants took the no rent

pledge.”<sup>22</sup> There was, of course, the usual hesitation, for the Congress forces were as yet too heterogeneous to stand solidly behind such measures. But developments had fully justified the prophesy of *The Times* in 1924 that

“among the ignorant masses of India a political revolution would become a social revolution in a very short time.”<sup>23</sup>

The “ignorant masses” proved to be as misguided as *The Times* had feared. They were stupid enough to see no reason why they should continue to pay the landlords and money-lenders who lived on their labour, and they continued their struggle even when the Congress leaders had attempted to bring it to an end. In the Central Provinces the Government reported an outbreak of thefts and highway robberies “directed against Brahmins and Marwari money-lenders.” Here also “the idea of mass action with which local people have been familiarised by the Civil Disobedience Movement caught on,” and mass looting of the parasitical classes was reported in Buldang district.<sup>24</sup>

The creation in January, 1931, of thirty “life-jagirs” in the Punjab, each yielding Rs. 100 per annum, “for continued good conduct and steadfast loyalty to the King,” illustrates the direction of Government policy. Propertied interests were on the side of the one power that was willing and able to defend them; and property, as in the days of the Mutiny, was to be in turn the reward of loyalty. To those who had, this meant security: to those who had not, the temptations of a bribe.<sup>25</sup>

In July, 1931, *Young India* revealed some interesting documents.<sup>26</sup> A letter labelled “confidential,” from the Deputy Commissioner at Rae-Bareilly, asked the recipient for information regarding “any objectionable activities of the Congress or Kisan Sabha or Panchayats directed against landlords or Government.” It was explained that the police “proposed to prosecute certain agitators,” and the landlord to whom the letter was addressed was instructed to direct his employees “to act promptly and energetically and fearlessly in this matter.”<sup>27</sup>

A second letter from the same source, also “confidential,”

complained to a landlord of his arrears with payments of the land-tax.

"I think I have already explained to you," wrote the Deputy-Commissioner, "how you can expedite your collections of rents. I am prepared to give you all legitimate assistance."

The letter then goes on to offer "police protection," advises legal measures against tenants, and explains that "this experiment" (apparently the presence of the police) "has proved very successful in the estates of those landlords who have followed my advice."<sup>28</sup>

About the same time, in explanation of the "confidential" character of these letters, an Order under Section 144 Cr. P.C. was issued in Rae-Bareilly by the District Magistrate. It was served on all active members of the National Congress in that district, and prohibited them from

"making any speech or utterance or attending any meeting or disseminating any leaflet or collecting subscription or doing anything in writing whatsoever on the present agrarian or political situation in the district in connection with any propaganda directly or indirectly connected with the agrarian, political or Labour problems."<sup>29</sup>

That the Government should thus prohibit Congress members from carrying on propaganda among tenants was an important admission of the new social character of this dynamic movement. But both the Government and the landlords had even choicer gifts in store. "Mothers, fathers or older brothers of village Congress men," wrote Mr. Gordon Halstead, "were beaten with rifles, horse whips, *lathis* or leather straps." According to this American missionary:

"Tenants were forbidden to attend Congress meetings, to wear *Khadi* . . . Gandhi caps or to make use of the national flag. . . . Villages were forced to give undertakings not to assist the Congress in any way. In some cases these undertakings were taken when tenants had



been beaten to a semi-conscious state. Their thumb prints were taken, which in India is as authentic as a signature. In other cases, men were placed in jail and promised their freedom only on giving an undertaking not to help Congress."<sup>30</sup>

Most of these events took place during the so-called "truce" made between Lord Irwin's government and the Congress. While the peasants starved, the Government proposed niggardly concessions in its own and the landlords' share of the profits of agriculture. They talked of "keeping the balance between the landlord and the tenant,"<sup>31</sup> as though God or Nature had ordained some such "balance" between the producer and the parasite.

Congress meanwhile moved steadily to the left. The "Pant Report" on *Agrarian Distress in the United Provinces* was published by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee in September, 1931, and proved a terrible indictment of the Government and the landlords.<sup>32</sup> A correspondent in the *New Statesman* pointed out in 1932 that in the Indian villages the names of Congress leaders were associated with

"opposition to the two institutions which the countryman knows, the government and, in the *zemin-dari* areas, the landlord."<sup>33</sup>

This recent development in the Congress point of view has been sustained in spite of the criticisms and defection of its more reactionary elements. Even the petty-bourgeoisie and many of the industrialists are prepared, like the nineteenth century radicals in Britain, to assist in breaking the power of Indian feudalism—even more readily than the British radicals on account of the connection between these feudal despots and their foreign masters. The Congress publication of 1936 on *The Agrarian Problem in India* is a masterly document with which no socialist could quarrel, and it exposes the whole system of landlordism as economically and ethically indefensible.<sup>34</sup>

By October, 1936, the Congress was openly anticipating a struggle with landed interests. In Orissa it declared

for the abolition of the "Permanent Settlement." It was pointed out that, in the United Provinces, whereas coloured ballot boxes were to be used in urban constituencies during the elections, the ballot boxes in the rural constituencies would only bear the names of candidates. Hence, in the country districts, where illiteracy is greatest, the peasant is penalised by a system which makes it impossible for him to distinguish his candidate's box from that of the rival candidates.<sup>35</sup> Another rule in the United Provinces permits the presiding officer in rural constituencies to admit any person for the purpose of identifying the voters, such a person to be in most cases the big landlord of the place or his agent. This, says the Congress Foreign News-letter, "would virtually mean that the illiterate voter, even against his wishes, would have to vote for the non-Congress candidate."<sup>36</sup>

The Secretary of the United Provinces Court of Wards (controlled by the Government) went so far as to issue an official circular to all District Officers in the U.P. stating that:

"It is essential in the interests of the class which the Court of Wards specially represents, and of agricultural interests generally, to inflict as crushing a defeat as possible on the Congress with its avowed socialist principles."

This circular went on to say that the Court had therefore decided to support in each constituency the candidate who would actively oppose the Congress programme and had the greatest chance of success in defeating the Congress candidate.<sup>37</sup>

Indian socialists to-day remain within the National Congress on two conditions. The first is that they are able to keep it in the main a radical organisation, heading leftward in order to keep pace with a demand which it is the business of socialists to stimulate. The other condition is that it shall remain a mass movement.<sup>38</sup> At present the Congress fulfills both these conditions. Mr. Brailsford has written of the "virtual unanimity" of the Indian people in the Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930-31,<sup>39</sup>

exposing the lie that the Moslem minority stands solidly against the Congress.<sup>40</sup> At an election, he said, Congress could "sweep the Peninsula"—though this would hardly apply within the property franchise of the new constitution. He tells of the illiterate masses, who knew by heart the Congress songs and ballads, of the part played by women,<sup>41</sup> and of the vast demonstrations. "More sober and orderly meetings I never saw," is his comment on gatherings of as many as twenty thousand; to which he adds that "the dispersal by *lathi* charges of such a gathering was described as 'maintaining order'."

Mr. Brailsford also refers to the omnipresence of Gandhi's photograph (though frequently made illegal). He found it even "in the wattled hut of an aboriginal tribesman, so poor that he owned nothing else, save his tools and his earthen pots."<sup>42</sup> Mr. Verrier Elwin, who had long sought for a man who had never heard of Gandhi, found one eventually who proved to have been stone deaf for twenty years.<sup>43</sup> The present author's experiences in 1930 were similar, and Mr. Horace Alexander, returning to India after two and a half years, was startled at the change. "Nationalism," he said, "is manifest everywhere."

This does not mean that nationalism alone can achieve the national liberation of India; nor is there any question of the mistakes of the Communists in the Kuomintang being repeated by the Indian socialists. They have their separate organisation which they are building up within the Congress; and the more the middle class leaders hesitate, the more the socialists tend to take the lead.<sup>44</sup> By forcing the Congress to face each social issue as it arises, the socialists should be able to win the leadership in the struggle for independence and to turn the Congress itself into a workers' and peasants' party far more formidable than any artificially created organisation, however perfect its policy.

Lord Acton said of the French Revolution that during six months, from January, 1789, to the fall of the Bastille in July, France travelled as far as England in six centuries. To-day events move even more swiftly, owing to the decline of the capitalist system and the increasing inability of the

owning classes to pay adequate "Dane-geld" to revolution in the form of concessions to mass demands. India, like Russia, may well accomplish in six months not only the bourgeois revolution of eighteenth century France, bringing independence and political democracy, but with it the social revolution that will liberate the tenant and the debtor, destroy the nascent capitalist class, and with the restoration of their land and their tools to the workers, lay the foundations of socialism.

It is for this moment that Indian socialists are conspicuously preparing. In the hour of victory the returning tide of bourgeois nationalism will sweep back upon the still advancing stream of the social revolution; and if India can survive that tidal bore it will emerge free from its princes and its landlords, its industrialists, money-lenders and priests. But for the achievement of this end two things are necessary at the present moment. In the first place, nationalism must be exploited as a political force and the mass contacts of the Congress used to impregnate the peasantry with a revolutionary purpose. And secondly the growing menace of imperialism to the standard of living in Britain must be used to develop an anti-imperialist movement in this country, which will be more than a negligible force in the hour of crisis.<sup>45</sup>

One essential reason why the socialists are keeping as long as possible within the National Congress is to be found in the attitude of the Government. Though it increasingly persecutes the socialist and nationalist movement,<sup>46</sup> it has as yet hesitated to make the Congress Socialist Party illegal; and it is widely believed that this is due to the realisation that such action at the moment would precipitate a national struggle comparable to that of 1930 to 1932. The Government, it is believed, hopes for a split between the nationalists and the socialists, sufficiently violent to enable the authorities to crush the socialists without opposition from the National Congress;<sup>47</sup> for such might well be the revenge of the nationalists if their ranks were split by the breaking away of the Congress Socialist Party.

Such a split is by no means impossible, and it would be justified by any one of several possible developments. If,

for example, Congress lost its mass contacts, the only reason for continued affiliation would cease to exist. There is also the remote possibility of Indian nationalism taking a fascist direction, though there is no sign of this at present. It may be remarked that, if such a danger ever arose, primary responsibility would lie with the Labour Party imperialists, who (by making working class movements and even the name of socialism hated in the colonies) have done so much to foster Colonial fascism.<sup>48</sup>

Events, accelerated in all probability by war, will destroy the roots of Western social democracy. Meanwhile in India the creed of the young students and intellectuals, the surest index of the future, points to Communism. Miss Mayo saw it, and wrote venomously in the first paragraph of her first chapter regarding the "little bookstalls where narrow-chested, near-sighted, anæmic young Bengali students in native dress brood over piles of fly-blown Russian pamphlets."<sup>49</sup> As early as 1929 a British missionary had noted "the rapid spread of Communism" in the towns, where it came to the workers "as a promising means of release from an intolerable situation."<sup>50</sup>

"Communism," as understood by these workers and intellectuals, does not necessarily mean the Third International. There is a deep interest in the Soviet Union and a real pride in the achievements of its peasants and workers, as an example of what a liberated India could do for itself in as many years. But the flirtations of the Comintern with British and French imperialism are regarded with open hostility by the Indian revolutionaries.

The Government's fear of Communism was shown in Willingdon's despatch to Lord Zetland, dealing with the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1935. "The dangers of this movement," wrote the Viceroy, "are not generally appreciated in this country because of its underground methods of working.

"But my government have ample evidence of the determination with which its activities are being pursued, and I am satisfied that it forms a very real, though possibly not an immediate, menace to the peace of the country."<sup>51</sup>

This statement, substituting "exploitation" for "peace," is undoubtedly true. "The fight that is coming," said a prominent Indian capitalist in 1935, "is one between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.'" <sup>53</sup> In this struggle Jawaharlal Nehru, the man of the future in India, should be able to achieve for socialism what Gandhi achieved for nationalism. Under his leadership, with a few well-chosen demands, the cult of an intellectual and industrial minority should become the objective of the masses.

India, said a writer in *Headway*, <sup>53</sup> is a "land of contrasts" where "housed in palaces of more than Mughal magnificence" the rulers of starving peasants have built for themselves a new capital at Delhi. In the summer months the imperial government migrates to Simla where "its members continue to lead lives invincibly Britannic at an altitude of 7,000 feet." <sup>54</sup> Here, oblivious of the intolerable heat in the plains, the white sahibs still contemplate their own interminable omnipotence.

But there is an old tradition which they forget and India remembers, that every dynasty builds a new Delhi before its fall. The New Delhi which the British have built cost over £10,000,000 and has been described as a "colossal monument of bureaucratic waste."

"There you will find officials with rooms like tennis lawns and vast Lutyens vistas. All around are the winter homes of the bureaucracy, arranged according to salary." <sup>55</sup>

During the whole summer this city of palaces stands empty and deserted. Its main buildings fulfil "the stated purpose of the architects, namely,

"to express, within the limits of the medium and the power of its users, the ideal and fact of British rule in India, of which New Delhi must ever be a monument." <sup>56</sup>

But Mr. Robert Byron, from whose glowing praises these words are quoted, commented that "from one end of India to the other I failed to elicit one good word for the

new capital from any man or woman." The *Daily Mail* correspondent who "described the inauguration of New Delhi found it a "quiet, in some senses almost depressing ceremony." He noted that "it lacked the brilliance which has enveloped past ceremonies of the first magnitude as well as their enthusiasm.

"No crowd of Indians was lining the street or pressing against barriers to witness a pageant such as they delight in. It was more like a semi-private function."<sup>57</sup>

It was indeed; for it celebrated only the temporary victory of private interests. And the coming Coronation Durbar, whatever tales to the contrary may be told in the British Press,<sup>58</sup> is likely to prove as dismal and uninspiring an occasion.

Those who confuse the quiescence of the people with their contentment deceive only themselves. While men have anything beyond their chains to lose they are slow to act and easily discouraged by repression; yet by perceptible stages the deepening crisis of the capitalist world is loosening the fine bonds of hope and fear that immobilise the multitude. The author has a vivid recollection of the contrast between the calm in India which preceded April, 1930, and the storm which followed.<sup>59</sup> There is such a calm in India to-day and it is not the calm of death that shrouds the ruins of the by-gone cities of Delhi.

Every movement in India has so far been stronger than the last, wider in its appeal, more revolutionary in its content. The masses have learnt in each successive struggle more than mere disillusionment: they have gained experience, produced new methods and new leaders. The slaves of the Pharaohs built the Pyramids. The slaves of the Mughals built the Taj Mahal. These slaves whom the sahibs of Delhi and Simla have despoiled shall yet raise a memorable monument to their masters, for they too will be the builders of a tomb. And in that sepulchre their lords shall lie like the Pharaohs, with forgotten gods for their eternal company.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Chapters XI and XIV.

<sup>2</sup> As far back as August 15th, 1930, Mr. R. W. Brock, (Editor of the Calcutta Financial Journal, *Capital*), wrote in *The Times* that "In India we can preserve our political pre-eminence or we can preserve our trade, but we cannot preserve both." This will be increasingly apparent in years to come. A similar passage from the *Observer*, quoted with approval in the *Labour Bulletin* of August, 1931, warned the country of the impossibility of selling cloth by "Churchillian methods."

<sup>3</sup> The imperialism of the Popular Front Government in Spain is an example. Formed to "defend democracy," it continued the political and economic oppression of the Moors, and paid a terrible cost for its errors. The *Congress Socialist* (Oct. 17th, 1936) made strong comments on this point.

<sup>4</sup> Or it may have been Marx. The Devil can cite either to his purpose, and the phrase as used here stands purely on its own merit, not on anyone's supposed verbal inspiration. But Lenin develops the same idea conclusively in his thesis on *Socialism and War*. National, as distinct from purely "class," struggles will have a revolutionary significance as long as there are oppressed and subject races. Nor is it possible to analyse such conflicts in purely "class" terminology, as the record of imperialism shows. When a British soldier, who had shot an Indian villager near Poona in November, 1923, was acquitted of murder, it was clearly his race and not his class that saved him. Similar examples are abundant, and Sir Henry Cotton in *New India* (p. 57) stated that he knew of only two cases where Europeans had been punished by the death penalty for murdering Indians. Class plays an increasingly important rôle; but the colour of the skin is still a vital matter.

<sup>5</sup> It should also be noted that class collaboration in India is purely *oppositional*, whereas in the Western "Popular Fronts" it is also *administrative*. It would be the greatest mistake for Indian socialists to continue this collaboration *after* a successful national revolution, as this would commit them to the support of the capitalist system, to which their present collaboration with the Indian middle-class does not commit them in any way.

<sup>6</sup> Joan Beauchamp in *British Imperialism in India*, p. 194.

<sup>7</sup> *Indian Politics*, by R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, London, 1935.

<sup>8</sup> See article by Harry Pollitt, R. P. Dutt and Bradley in the *Congress Socialist* (Dec. 12th, 1936).

<sup>9</sup> *British Imperialism in India*, p. 196.

<sup>10</sup> How much the Government fear M. N. Roy's policy may be noted from the fact that a Mr. Gupta of Kurigam (Bengal) was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment in November, 1936, for the mere possession of Roy's *Future of Indian Politics*. On appeal this sentence was reduced to nine months R.I., but the conviction was upheld.

<sup>11</sup> And all of them unpleasant. See *British Imperialism in India*, pp. 194-8 and 221.



<sup>12</sup> Mr. Shiva Rao (Indian Reformist Trade Union Leader) reported in *The Hindu*, Jan. 25th, 1932. This is not only the natural result of political democracy, but follows from the release of energy when a nationalist movement has fulfilled itself. Mr. Shaw, in his preface to *John Bull's Other Island*, has shown that unfulfilled national aspirations tend to cramp all other demands.

<sup>13</sup> This has been a matter of repeated protests from the Legislative Assembly. The new constitution will leave the matter of League representation in the hands of Whitehall.

<sup>14</sup> *The Indian Ferment*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>15</sup> This speech was republished in *India and the World* (London, 1936).

<sup>16</sup> See the Faizpur resolutions, as reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, Dec. 28th, 1936.

<sup>17</sup> *Congress Socialist*, July 18th, 1936. See also the editorial of this paper on August 1st, 1936, which completely condemns the misleading division of the powers into "aggressive" and "peace-loving" states.

<sup>18</sup> See M. R. Masani's letter on this subject in the *New Statesman* (Oct. 10th, 1935). He pointed out that the Congress organised a boycott of Italian trade with the collaboration of the T.U.C. and the Socialists, but that India had no intention of supporting British imperialism against Italian fascism.

<sup>19</sup> The new constitution will be applied at the centre in 1940. Here, of course, the reactionary character of the electorate and the representation of the Princes will make a pro-Government majority an absolute certainty. On the other hand, in the Provincial elections, where the franchise is slightly broader, Congress has secured an absolute majority in six of the eleven Provincial Assemblies.

<sup>20</sup> Statement on the Recommendations of the Indian Statutory Commission, by the landowners of India. Prepared by the British Indian Association, Calcutta, 1930.

<sup>21</sup> This conference also "prayed that the land-owning class should have adequate representation commensurate with their stake in the country" (this referred to the Round Table Conference) and the conference urged the creation of provincial Second Chambers representing "the aristocracy of land, wealth and learning." Finally these loyalists expressed their appreciation of Lord Irwin and asked for an extension in his tenure of the Viceroyalty.

<sup>22</sup> *British Imperialism in India*, by Joan Beauchamp (p. 209). Compare Chapter XI and *Rebel India*, pp. 56-7. Brailsford shows how Congress was propelled into the struggle by the ardour which it had itself aroused in the peasantry.

<sup>23</sup> *The Times*, March 13th, 1924.

<sup>24</sup> Government Communiqué reported in the *Associated Press*, Nagpur, Jan. 6th, 1931. The propertied classes were not without their champion, for the communiqué goes on to say that "strong action was taken and over one hundred arrests were made."

<sup>25</sup> Since Lord Irwin's time the Government has been much more successful than it was in the past in its relationship with the propertied classes of India. Tories previously made the mistake of treating Indians with a somewhat indiscriminate contempt. Birkenhead, for example,

angered these classes by the contumely with which he rewarded them for "lifelong unpopular devotion to an alien Government." (*The Indian Ferment*, p. 186).

<sup>26</sup> *Young India*, July 2nd, 1931.

<sup>27</sup> Ref. D.O. 12/6, dated June 19th, 1931.

<sup>28</sup> D.O. No. 11 Deputy Commissioner's Office, Rae-Bareilly, June 19th, 1931.

<sup>29</sup> Dated June 10th, 1931. This Order was issued "in view of the present agrarian situation and the tension between the Landlords and Tenants in this District."

<sup>30</sup> *Unity*, (Chicago), Sept. 12th, 1932. The leather straps, Mr. Halstead pointed out, were peculiarly objectionable to the Hindus for religious reasons. They were therefore used by Moslem police (for reasons explained in Chap. XII) "which caused communal feelings to run high in some places." Evidence substantiating these and other charges is to be found in the Report of the "Pant Committee," appointed by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee to enquire into the agrarian situation. (Allahabad, 1931).

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Mr. E. C. Melville, (Home Secretary to the Viceroy) to Jawaharlal Nehru (dated Oct. 19th, 1931).

<sup>32</sup> See Note 30, above.

<sup>33</sup> Article by "A correspondent in India," *New Statesman*, April 9th, 1932. The same correspondent points out that "the average villager is probably quite capable of understanding, and giving a fairly shrewd judgment on, a simple political issue." He points to the success of an almost universal suffrage in Ceylon.

<sup>34</sup> *Congress Political and Economic Studies* No. 1. (Allahabad, 1936).

<sup>35</sup> This is the arrangement made under the new election rules in the U.P. In the towns the ballot box of each candidate will be distinguishable by its colour.

<sup>36</sup> Congress Foreign Department Newsletter No. 9. (Oct. 29th, 1936). This is an irregular service, as the Government has, on occasion, confiscated the entire issue at the Post Office.

<sup>37</sup> Circular No. K-70/ C.W. 886/34, dated July 9th, 1936.

<sup>38</sup> The mass support commanded by the Congress is indicated in many places among these pages. The reader may also note the amazing force of the "social boycott" (used by the community against individuals who co-operate with the Government) as demonstrated in *The Indian Crisis* (pp. 150-1). As an example, when *ashram* properties have been seized and sold, few but officials would bid for them, because the community supported Congress. Mr. Arnold Ward (a former Conservative M.P.) noted that if the Government had Indian supporters they "were never seen or heard" and must be "a craven set of cowards." (*Modern Review*, March, 1930.)

<sup>39</sup> *Rebel India*, pp. 12-14 and 148.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter XII. In 1931 the Nationalist Muslim Party claimed to have held over 3,000 meetings during the year (in support of the Congress) and that between 12,000 and 14,000 of their members had suffered imprisonment in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

<sup>41</sup> "If they have not yet won *Swaraj* for India," writes Brailsford, "they have completed the emancipation of their own sex." (*Rebel India*, p. 16). This is a pardonable exaggeration.

<sup>42</sup> *Rebel India*, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Leaves from the Jungle*, p. 132. Mr. Elwin did, however, eventually find some aborigines who thought that Gandhi was something to eat. In an unpublished letter he has recorded an encounter with an Afridi on the frontier. This man knew of Gandhi, whom he called the *Malang* (Saint) but thought there was also another great leader in India called *Inquilab* (Revolution!).

<sup>44</sup> The immediate issue must clearly be the dividing point of classes and parties in every struggle. At the barricades no one in his senses rejects any help available. The only mistake associated with this practical unity is the typical reformist error of accepting the ally's terms as the condition of his support.

<sup>45</sup> This anticipates the "boomerang" process discussed in Chapter XIV, whereby British imperialism must ultimately strike at the British working-class. There is no danger of fascism in Britain while bribes are cheaper than bludgeons; but when this ceases to be the case the decline of capitalism itself and the competition of coolie labour will force down our standard of living. Then will come the last struggle of the "Have" and "Have-not" Powers, followed by fascism and revolution. And in that hour the sahibs and their sepoys will be as great a menace to us as were the Praetorian Guards to Rome or Franco's Moors to the Spanish Republic.

<sup>46</sup> There has been, in fact, a general revival of repressive measures, as indicated in the previous chapter. Among numerous "sedition" charges, the sentencing of the editor of the *Deshdarpan* (Calcutta daily) is typical. On June 24th, 1936, the High Court confirmed his conviction (whilst reducing the sentence to three months' rigorous imprisonment) for reminding the public of the *Amritsar Massacre*. Some other recent examples are: the arrest and externment of numerous Socialist workers in the latter months of 1936, the raid on the office of the Calcutta Labour Party on June 21st, 1936, and the prosecution of sixty-two Mohammedans at Gopalpur, Bengal (June 16th, 1936), for forming a peasant committee against landlords and money-lenders. See also Chapter XI.

<sup>47</sup> Mr. Edward Thompson went so far as to prophesy this split with cheerful certainty in the *News Chronicle* (Nov. 12th, 1936), saying that it would take place the following month, when Congress met. But the socialists cheated the prophets.

<sup>48</sup> This applies especially to Palestine, where fascist propaganda would have had little chance among the Arabs if the Labour Party had championed their rights and assisted them in their struggle for independence. Germany itself was treated like a colony after the War; and Hitler, who was "born at Versailles," might have been considerably checked had the British and French "socialists" wholeheartedly opposed the Versailles Treaty. In Morocco, while this book is being written, the French "Popular Front" Government has just made it illegal for any native to become a member of a French trade union; and whilst oppression and exploitation continues unabated in the French Colonies, General Franco has been making every imaginable promise to the

Moors of Spanish Morocco. This is how colonial workers are driven into the arms of fascism. Even the Moslem workers' organisation "l'Etoile Nord-Africaine," which supported the Popular Front in France, has just been suppressed by the Blum Government.

<sup>48</sup> See *Mother India*. This was in Calcutta where, had Miss Mayo not been a little near-sighted herself, she would have observed that there are no Russian pamphlets openly on sale because pamphlets imported from Russia are illegal and pamphlets written in Russian would not have been understood. However, she succeeds in conveying two important facts: the prevalence of communism among the students and the basic prejudices of Miss Mayo.

<sup>49</sup> John S. Hoyland in *The Case for India* (London, 1929). See pp. 111-2.

<sup>51</sup> *News Chronicle*, Nov. 27th, 1935. This paper reported Willingdon as saying that the Communists aimed at an insurrection of "the wildest (sic) possible masses of the working-class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie."

<sup>52</sup> Sir H. P. Mody, reported in the *News Chronicle* of Sept. 12th, 1935. Mody was then attempting "a rally of non-Congress forces to work the new Constitution." He is a director of Tatas, and the *News Chronicle* Special Commissioner noted that "the cynical Congress man has dubbed his proposed party the Tata Protection Society."

<sup>53</sup> *Headway* (League of Nations Union Journal), Oct. 1932.

<sup>54</sup> The quotations are from the writer in *Headway*, who emphasises the contrast further by his description of the rickshaws used at Simla. In these the Sahibs sit while "four sweating or shivering coolies drag them up or down the steep roads." For a typical contrast in the standards of living (between Europeans and Indians) see *Leaves from the Jungle*, p. 130.

<sup>55</sup> Frederick Atherton in the *Daily Herald* (May 2nd, 1934). Compare *The Indian Ferment*, (p. 202).

<sup>56</sup> Mr. Robert Byron in a broadcast speech published in *The Listener* (Feb. 18th, 1931). "Few rulers," he concludes, "have been privileged to inhabit so magnificent a dwelling . . . and no architect has ever before raised so gorgeous a monument either to himself or to England." India only paid the bill.

<sup>57</sup> The late Sir Percival Phillips in the *Daily Mail* (Feb. 11th, 1931).

<sup>58</sup> The *Morning Post* (Dec. 15th, 1936) has already started. According to this paper the Government were "advised of a strong desire among all classes in India that the Coronation Durbar should be held as previously suggested." (Our italics.) Actually plans were being extensively prepared for boycotting this event, and the King's visit to India has since been "postponed" in consequence.

<sup>59</sup> The author also recollects that on the way to India in 1929 every English man and woman on the boat confidently assured him that nationalism was dead in India and that the Congress no longer had any influence. They were the men on the spot. They knew.



## APPENDIX

### THE PATIALA CASE

SHORTLY before the Round Table Conference assembled in 1930 I thought it desirable to lay the facts of this case before the British public, in order that they might see what manner of men had been selected by Lord Irwin, as Viceroy, to represent India.

The article which I then wrote, after some preliminary remarks regarding the Princes in general, ran as follows:

The particular case to which I desire to draw attention is that of Patiala State. The whole of India was shocked by the publication, early in the present year, of a document entitled "The Indictment of Patiala." The authors of this indictment are men well-known in India as men of character and ability. The charges that they made against the Maharaja of Patiala, with ample documentary evidence, were such as to make legal action on his part imperative. As my object is not the vilification of the Maharaja but a criticism of the Government, I will only briefly summarize the main charges:

- (1) Murder of Lal Singh, a subject of Patiala State.
- (2) Inhuman tortures, illegal arrests, confinements and confiscations.
- (3) Forced labour for purposes other than public utility works.
- (4) Misappropriation of funds raised for public purposes.

The honour of a man and a ruler demanded immediate enquiry into these allegations.

It is well known that such an enquiry was the object of those who drew up the indictment. Two simple courses were open to the Maharaja. He could either have had the authors prosecuted for criminal libel, or he could have dealt with them under the Princes' Protection Act. Either of these courses would have meant an open legal investigation. But instead of taking either of these courses, the Maharaja of Patiala, after some delay, wrote to the Viceroy asking for an enquiry and suggesting the Hon. J. A. O. Fitzpatrick as a suitable person to conduct it. The reason for this choice will be apparent from comments which I shall cite later. •

The Government's response was conveyed in a communiqué of May 9th, 1930, announcing the appointment of the said Mr. Fitzpatrick to conduct an inquiry *in camera*. The reference of such an important case to a secret tribunal was in itself sufficiently preposterous, but I will add some of the further points raised by the Working Committee of the All India States Peoples' Conference. This body (The States Peoples' Conference) had been responsible for the appointment of the original committee which had drawn up the *Indictment of Patiala*; and the following were among its reasons for refusing to co-operate in the official enquiry.

- (1) The officer appointed was a nominee of the Maharaja.
- (2) The said officer had been connected with the Maharaja in the discharge of his political duties and was not likely to be impartial. (As Agent of the Governor-General, Punjab States, Mr. Fitzpatrick was brought into close personal contact with the Maharaja, and the establishment of the charges would have been greatly to his own discredit.)
- (3) It would be necessary for the Committee to cite Mr. Fitzpatrick as a witness, because it was his job as "Agent" to prevent maladministration and he had been several times appealed to.
- (4) An *in camera* inquiry inspired no confidence.
- (5) No provision was made for protection of witnesses against possible reprisals by the Maharaja, whose subjects most of them would be. Intimidation of this character is among the original accusations.

These criticisms were generally endorsed by the Press and public in India. It was felt that a secret inquiry was quite unsatisfactory and that the officer appointed should either enjoy the confidence of both parties or be an independent selection. This view was endorsed by reputable moderate papers such as the *Servant of India*, the *Indian Social Reformer*, *New India*, and *The Leader*.

No heed was paid to these protests, and the Fitzpatrick Enquiry was pursued in spite of the complete boycott of Patiala's accusers, who refused either to attend or to lead evidence. On July 15th a letter was published in *The Hindu* from one of the authors of the indictment, saying that he had now additional documentary evidence including letters written by the Maharaja and his former prime minister. *This evidence he offered to produce before the Viceroy*, but in no circumstances before Mr. Fitzpatrick. He also claimed that a most important witness who was alleged by the Patiala authorities to have escaped from jail had in fact been persuaded to absent himself. Of this fact also he claimed to have proof.

These statements too were ignored, and Mr. Fitzpatrick

proceeded to make his report to the Government of India, who "satisfied themselves that the evidence fails to substantiate any charges made against His Highness the Maharaja . . . which are shown to have been the outcome of a deliberate conspiracy between certain individuals and public bodies with the object of vilifying His Highness." (Communiqué of August 4th, 1930.)

Mr. Fitzpatrick's report has not been published, and no action has been taken by the Maharaja against the authors of the "conspiracy," who continue to court legal proceedings. The public is left to assume that both the Maharaja and the Government of India are afraid of the open and straightforward course.

"If," said the President of the States Peoples' Conference recently, "the Paramount Power would not interfere . . . the oppressed people of a State resorting to their birthrights of rebellion and revolution would set matters right in no time." We claim instead to champion the legitimate grievances of these people, and the Patiala Enquiry shows how we fulfil our obligation. It was well said by another leader of the States Peoples with reference to this enquiry that "the control by the Paramount Power can no longer be regarded as a safeguard against maladministration."

The Princes are to be represented at the Round Table Conference by a large delegation which will include the Maharaja of Patiala. Without entering here into the question of their right to represent the 70,000,000 people of their States; without entering into the right of those people at least to independent representation; without concerning myself with the whole nature and structure of that Conference, is it not legitimate to ask whether it is fitting that the Maharaja of Patiala should attend it until he has met his accusers in an open and impartial court of law?

This article was submitted to John Paton, then editor of the *New Leader*. Paton, after some discussion and correspondence, decided not to publish it for reasons which appeared to me inadequate. It seemed to me that the publication of such an article would greatly discredit both the Round Table Conference and the Labour Government; and for both reasons I was determined to make known the facts.

My next move was to attempt publication in a paper which has long built up its sales on sensational "exposures" and has had in recent years a radical reputation. In the office of this paper I was interviewed by a young man who informed me:

- (a) that no paper in London would publish my article.
- (b) that this was due to a circular, issued by the Labour Government, asking that nothing unpleasant should be said about the Indian Princes before or during the Conference.



(c) that he believed the accusations against Patiala were true and that the "enquiry" had even disgusted many leading officials in Delhi. (I confirmed this statement later from an independent and authoritative source.)

(d) that in spite of this "*we were in a tight corner over there, and we must keep in with these fellows (the princes) who were the only people we could depend upon.*"

(e) that a certain person whom Patiala was alleged to have wronged was trying to shoot him.

Shortly after this the Maharaja arrived in London, travelling by an unexpected route, arriving at his hotel some time before he was expected, and behaving generally in a manner that indicated the probable truth of the last statement. Laudatory articles on Patiala, with photographs, adorned the pages of the press, including the organ of "Labour."

Having found publication impossible, I next tried Trafalgar Square, where a meeting on India was held while the Round Table Conference was in progress. In the presence of a crowd which included Scotland Yard men (who were taking down every word I said) I asked for special notice to be taken of what I was about to say and then gave the facts regarding this case. I also publicly entreated the plain-clothes men to convey a report of my speech to the Maharaja and to the Secretary of State for India.

At about the same time an anonymous author produced a pamphlet on the case which was distributed to members of Parliament. This created so much scandal that the newspapers were obliged to take note of it and endeavoured to explain away the whole affair by a garbled story of the indictment and "enquiry," which they represented as having "cleared" the Maharaja's character. They also alluded to the activities of Patiala's rival, the deposed Ruler of Nabha State.

Both Patiala State and Nabha are in the Punjab, and the quarrel between the two princes has been no secret. The facts regarding this quarrel (which has no bearing on the Patiala case except in the insinuations of the press) are quite simple. Patiala has always kept in with the British: he has even had grouse fetched from Scotland for British officers and officials to shoot in his jungles. His political secretary and foreign minister for some time was Mr. Rushbrooke Williams, who doubled these posts with that of Director to the British Government's Information Bureau. During the War Patiala's entire resources were placed at the disposal of the British.

Nabha, on the other hand, refused to help the British in the War—a refusal which was, I believe, unique among the princes. After the War the British Government found maladministration in his State and he was deposed. As the odds are a hundred

to one that maladministration can be found in *any* Indian State (if one were to look for it), the deposition of Nabha, like the exoneration of Patiala, may be directly traced to his political relations with the British.

Nabha, it is true, had securities in a French bank which the British Government were unable to sequester; and after his deposition his agents continued to use these resources to carry on propaganda against Patiala. I deliberately mention this fact because a Labour M.P. informed me in 1930 that both princes had their support in Parliament and that "decent" members were afraid to touch the Patiala scandal for fear of being associated with his rival. To my certain knowledge Patiala's solicitor at that time was a Labour Member of Parliament; but I could not identify four other Parliamentary supporters mentioned by my informant, and I only discovered the name of one member of Nabha's Parliamentary Group.

In 1934 Joan Beauchamp revealed to the British public a number of facts relating to the Patiala Case in her book *British Imperialism in India*. Miss Beauchamp dealt with the actual charges against Patiala, as stated in the "Indictment." I endeavoured to supplement this account in the *New Leader* (December 14th, 1934). In a review of Miss Beauchamp's book I stated most of the facts given here, so as to show that the worst crime was that of the British Government and the leaders of the Labour Party, who betrayed the victims of Patiala's tyranny by a piece of calculated hypocrisy. The following year the Maharaja arrived in London to attend the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, and the charges made in the *Indictment* were revived in the columns of the *Daily Worker*.

During the greater part of this time Patiala was Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. In the Jubilee Celebrations he was an honoured guest in this country. He was, in short, in a public position such that honour and policy alike appeared to demand legal procedure in the face of such open accusations. He preferred, however, to follow the same course that served him on his way to the Round Table Conference in 1930, when he skilfully avoided the crowd waiting to boo him at Bombay.<sup>1</sup> In short, he has been as anxious to run away from any prospect of a legal action as the kindly Government has been to cover his tracks.

That Patiala should, after so much trouble to all concerned, have proved "difficult" over the acceptance of the new Constitution is one of the little ironies of politics. He was one of those princes who were not satisfied with the vast powers which the Government of India Act will bestow upon them; and since the Round Table Conference Patiala has not been an easy man to deal with. Hence—strange to say—we find that according to *Reynolds Illustrated Weekly* (August 27th, 1933):

<sup>1</sup> See *Times of India* August 25th, 1930.

"The Government of India is believed to have intervened in the financial affairs of Patiala, an important Indian Native State, and warned the Maharaja against diverting revenues to his own purse."

This tardy action was coupled with sudden publicity in the same paper to the fact that civil servants in Patiala States were "said to have had no pay for six months, although their ruler, spending 60 per cent of the State revenues on himself, was maintaining a household of 500 servants and 3,000 camp followers."

In opposing the new Constitution the Maharaja made for himself new and powerful allies. *The Times* of December 18th, 1934, published a letter addressed to Patiala and signed by forty-two Members of Parliament, including Churchill and Sir Henry Page Croft. This letter encouraged Patiala to oppose the new Constitution because, said the writers, "if you yield, your destruction is certain." The Maharaja appears, nevertheless, to have yielded to political blackmail from the other wing of the Ruling Class; for he has since become once more (for reasons best known to himself) a staunch supporter of the Government's Indian policy. The Maharaja even bought the entire back page of the *Times* India Supplement of March 23rd, 1937, for self-advertisement, perorating with the hint that his State was "eminently fitted to play an important part in the Federal Government which is soon to be inaugurated."

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